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MEANINGFUL GAMEPLAY EXPERIENCE ELICITING SUSPENSE

A Qualitative Textual Analysis of *The Walking Dead*:
Season 1

ABSTRACT

Niko Riissanen: Meaningful Gameplay Experience Eliciting Suspense – A Qualitative Textual Analysis of *The Walking Dead: Season 1*

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Both suspense and gameplay are well-researched topics, but the combination of them are not. The study presented in this master's thesis helps to fill this gap in research. Chapters 2, 3, and 4 help to understand the complex and intertwined nature of game, player, and gameplay. Chapter 5 introduces four suspense types (*anticipation of the startle*, *competitive suspense*, *empathetic suspense*, and *helpless spectator*) and presents a new definition of suspense in video games as a subjective emotional experience of the player elicited from the combination of fear, hope, and uncertain outcome in response to the information acquired from the system combined to the player's earlier knowledge.

A multidisciplinary qualitative textual analysis of the meaningful gameplay experience eliciting suspense in *The Walking Dead: Season 1* video game is conducted with the help of the guideline. The results show that the four suspense types occur during gameplay and are often overlapping resulting in a more intense gameplay experience. In addition, the results indicate new types of suspense, named *anticipation of the action sequence*, *unintended player elicited suspense*, and *unintended system elicited suspense*.

Keywords: games, suspense, textual analysis, gameplay experience, The Walking Dead

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APPENDIX

1 INTRODUCTION

Suspense is a core element of all types of games and a subjective, emotional player experience (Järvinen, 2008; Van Vught & Schott, 2012). Elements of formal and story elicit emotions, such as suspense, when they are introduced for the player in complex gaming encounters in which the game, the player, and the gameplay are intertwined (Salen & Zimmerman, 2004; Järvinen, 2008; Mukherjee, 2015). This complexity is underlined by the nature of video games: they require participatory action of the player (Salen & Zimmerman, 2004; Ermi & Mäyrä, 2005; Mukherjee, 2015). Another fundamental part in all games is, for example, the concept of player's choice (Salen & Zimmerman, 2004), which raises the issues of both what has happened and how as well as the uncertainty of the outcome of the choice, which is the core of suspense (Ortony, Clore and Collins, 1990; Järvinen, 2008).

Considering that suspense is both a core emotion of humans and a core element of games, the importance of studying suspense in video games is apparent. Although meritorious, the previous research of the topic has been somewhat inadequate. For example, the studies have categorised suspense to different types (Frome & Smuts, 2004; Van Vught & Schott, 2012) or connected suspense solely to a certain genre, namely horror (Perron, 2009). There have also been large scale studies, such as Järvinen's (2008) doctoral dissertation *Games Without Frontiers - Theories and Methods for Game Studies and Design*, but these have inevitably been vague considering the multi-sidedness of the topic of suspense. Specifically, the previous studies have been short of in-depth case studies, e.g. game analyses combining suspense with the gameplay experience in its complexity.

The research problem of this master's thesis can be defined as a lack of adequate studies on the topic of suspense in the context of meaningful gameplay experiences. Furthermore, the research problem is set to find the proper methodology for tackling the issue. To fill the gap in the previous research of suspense, this master's thesis presents the qualitative textual analysis of *The Walking Dead: Season 1* (Telltale Games, 2012).

The aim of this master's thesis is to introduce a more specific view of suspense in video games, which is especially applicable in cinematic, story-driven games. Consequently, the research question (RQ) for this study is the following:

How the experience of suspense is elicited through the meaningful gameplay experience?

To be able to answer the research question, this thesis will first discuss what meaningful gameplay experiences and suspense in games is. Meaningful game experiences will be discussed with the help of interconnected theories and concepts of games, players, and gameplay experience in chapters 2, 3 and 4. In general, game studies is a rather young discipline originating from the beginning of this millennium (Aarseth, 2001; Mukherjee, 2015). It has borrowed conventions used in other disciplines making interdisciplinarity and research with multiple methodologies integral elements of game studies (Mäyrä, 2009; Fernández-Vara, 2015; Mukherjee, 2015). The focus has been on the topics of games, play or players, and the best results are achieved, when the topics are studied intertwined (Mäyrä, 2009; Lankoski & Björk, 2015; Mukherjee, 2015). As the mentioned topics are highly researched, only the most relevant aspects are presented in this master's thesis, namely the ones that intersect with the characteristics of the game under analysis, *The Walking Dead: Season 1* (later referred as *TWD:SI*). In addition, the theory of (w)reading is introduced in chapter 4.3, which is an essential concept on understanding the process of the gameplay experience (Mukherjee, 2015) and used as a data collection method of the Walkthrough of *TWD:SI*.

Suspense in games is discussed in chapter 5. As mentioned earlier, the topic of suspense has a long history, which origins from the Ancient Greek (Whalley, 1997). In fact, the topic is not only extensive, but also multi-disciplinary, combining the fields of e.g. humanism and psychology (Reich & Vorderer, 2015). For demarcating the area of the topic of becoming too extensive, the focus of the chapter is mainly on video games, and particularly from the point of view of cinematic, story-driven video games, such as *TWD:SI*. As a result, suspense in video games is categorised into four different types in chapter 5.3. In addition, a new definition of suspense in video games is introduced in chapter 5.4.

Chapter 6 introduces the methodology of the study, which is two-folded by nature. Briefly, it can be described as the qualitative textual analysis of the Walkthrough of *TWD:SI*. The first part is the Walkthrough, which is conducted by the method of (w)reading (Mukherjee, 2015) and it is a written text of the subjective, meaningful and emotional gameplay experience of *TWD:SI* played for the first and single time. Even though the text of the Walkthrough consists of playing the whole game, only certain

sections of the data of gameplay experience are selected for the qualitative textual analysis presented in chapters 8. The qualitative textual analysis is conducted with the help of a four-layered guideline, which is introduced in chapter 7 in order to answer the RQ.

Finally, Chapter 9 summaries the process and the findings of the study conducted in this master's thesis. The study confirms similar results of the preceding studies of suspense in video games and reveals new findings. Although suspense is a widely researched topic, the revelation of new findings alone proves the importance of further studying the topic.

2 GAMES AS COMPLEX SYSTEMS

In this chapter, different theories and concepts are introduced for better understand games as complex, meaning making systems (Salen & Zimmerman, 2004; Mäyrä, 2009; Mukherjee, 2015). For example, video games can be discussed as systems of many kinds (Crawford, 1997; Salen & Zimmerman, 2004; Nacke, 2014), the discussion can emphasise the storytelling aspects (Murray, 1997; Juul, 2005; Mukherjee, 2015) or video games can be discussed as texts (Murray, 1997; Aarseth, 1997; Montfort, 2001; Mukherjee, 2015). This is underlined by the hybrid nature of video games: they require participatory action for constructing their structures (Salen & Zimmerman, 2004; Ermi & Mäyrä, 2005; Van Vught & Schott, 2012; Mukherjee, 2015). This complex relationship, where the game, the player, and the gameplay are intertwined, calls the need to find ways to discuss video games in a more applicable manner (Consalvo and Dutton, 2006; Fernández-Vara, 2015; Mukherjee, 2015). However, as the study of games is multisided and because of the vast amount of research done in the field of game studies (Mäyrä, 2009; Fernández-Vara, 2015; Mukherjee, 2015; Lankoski & Björk, 2015), only the most applicable concepts and theories are selected and the emphasis is on the cinematic, story-driven games, such as the game under scrutiny: *TWD:SI*. The objective of this chapter is to set a foundation for defining *TWD:SI* in all its complexity as precisely as possible for conducting the qualitative textual analysis presented in this master's thesis.

At first, the history of game studies is briefly introduced, which is highlighted by the debate between two approaches: the Ludologists and the Narratologists (Juul 2005; Mukherjee, 2015). Acknowledging the history is important for understanding games as complex systems. Then, the concept of game elements is discussed especially from the formal point of view. Lastly, the multiple sides of video games are discussed from the viewpoints of formal systems, storytelling, and textual.

2.1 Towards defining games as systems

One of the salient debates of game studies have been between two approaches: the Ludologists, who see video games as systems, and the Narratologists, who see video games as stories (Juul 2005; Mukherjee, 2015). Even though coming from two opposite approaches, the pioneering work of both Espen Aarseth and Janet Murray shared some

similarities. They both understood the complexity of video games, and that they could be analysed as texts (Mukherjee, 2015). Murray (1997), discusses the storytelling possibilities of video games, and the authorship between the game and the player. Being *“the most powerful representational medium yet”*, Murray (1997, 284) claims that video games should be placed *“as firmly as possible in the hands of the storytellers”* (Murray, 1997, 284). Aarseth’s approach was the opposite. He expanded the use of the term text from being merely *“a chain of signifiers”*, to *“a whole range of phenomena”* (Aarseth, 1997, 20). Furthermore, Aarseth presented the term ergodic, which highlights actively experiencing the text by the reader/player, while using the skills beyond *“eye movement and the periodic or arbitrary turning the pages.”* (Aarseth, 1997, 2; Mukherjee, 2015).

By the year 2006, Aarseth had a different stance, and a claim: *“games are not textual”* (Aarseth, 2006, 47) resulted that video games as an ergodic media were recognised neither as texts, nor as stories (Mukherjee, 2015). Famous for his quote: *“If I throw a ball at you I don’t expect you to drop it and wait until it starts telling stories”*, Markku Eskelinen (2001, para. 1), one of the most prominent representatives of Ludology, dismissed the story as essential for the gameplay and claiming that the story is merely a prosthesis. This, followed by the research done by other Ludologists, eventually polarized the area of game studies between Ludologists and the Narratologists (Mukherjee, 2015).

Over the years, the polarisation between two positions has got well-earned critique, and the camps of Ludologists and the Narratologists have started to come closer (Mukherjee, 2015). This has enabled different theories and concepts to gain more ground, which are not in either extreme positions, but rather in between. Henry Jenkins’ (2007) concept of transmedial storytelling and Jesper Juul’s (2005) theories of video games as half real, to name a few, are important contributions for understanding video games as a complex and unique media. Nowadays, game studies can be seen to drawn towards the Ludologists approach as the word ludology can be translated as game studies (Mukherjee, 2015).

2.2 Game elements

Game elements are every building block of a game that can be classified: rules, goals, challenge, objects, resources, boundaries, outcome, etc. (Salen & Zimmerman, 2004; Nacke, 2014). They include procedures, that *“are actions or methods of play allowed by a game’s rules”* (Nacke, 2014, para. Formal Game Elements: Procedures). Elements of

games include also *story elements*, which are discussed in chapter 2.4 (Sheldon, 2004; McIntosh, Cohn and Grace, 2010; Rabin, 2010; Mukherjee, 2015). Furthermore, the elements of games are not restricted in the game itself, but also include various elements that intertwine the player to the game through gameplay. These game elements combined set, not only possibilities, but also limitations, on what can and cannot be done by the player in the complex systems of games (Salen & Zimmerman, 2004; Nacke, 2014). For example, in a football match the procedure could be simply: *the player(s) kick(s) the ball in the football field*. In video games, this could be categorized in different elements such as game components (*ball*), game mechanics (*kick*), game environments (*football field*) and events (*football match*).

The first element under inspection is *rules*, which are a fundamental character of games, and differentiates games from other forms of entertainment, art or media (Salen & Zimmerman, 2004; Juul, 2005; Nacke, 2014). Rules of the game are technical elements, and are both formative and formal (Mukherjee, 2015). Rules form “*the underlying structure of the game-system and also facilitate the emergence of new forms through various combinations of rules*” (Mukherjee, 2015, 71). As a fundamental element of games, rules enable play. Rules dictate what player can and cannot do in the game, and furthermore, set the outlines for achieving the goal(s) in the game. Games include *ends*, i.e. the accepted ways of achieving goals, and *means*, which set restrictions on achieving these goals, which in turn can, e.g. create tension or frustration (Suits, 2005; Salen & Zimmerman, 2006). For example, in a football match, ends are to score goal(s) against the opponent. Means are to do this by simply using the player’s foot (or head). The more efficient way would be using the hands, but that would be against the rules. The complex intersection of rules and different situations offer players interesting decisions (Salen & Zimmerman, 2006). Furthermore, in the gameplay situation, rules enable the player to make meaningful decisions.

Rules can be divided in three separate levels: constitutive, operational, and implicit (Mukherjee, 2015). Firstly, constitutive rules deals with the internal events of the game. Secondly, operational rules include both internal and external events of gameplay. They are the rules of play that are to be followed in the gameplay situation manifesting the choices and outcomes to the player. Thirdly, implicit rules include the ‘unwritten rules’ e.g. etiquette of gameplay activity. (Salen & Zimmerman, 2004.) Being one of the core elements of games, rules constitute the formal structure of games. One of the formal

characteristics of rules is that “*rules limit player action*” (Salen & Zimmerman, 2004, chapter 11, 4). Being a set of instructions, rules are meant to be followed for game to progress. In addition, “*rules are binding*” (Salen & Zimmerman, 2004, chapter 11, 4): they represent the authority of the system. This means that rules directly influence on subjects of authority and control of the game. For example, rules force the players to take certain path in order to achieve goals. These formal characteristics of rules function during the gameplay. The lack of any of the mentioned characteristics may result that the gameplay of the system is impossible. (ibid.)

After introducing the various aspects of rules, other elements of games need to be discussed. Separating games from other forms of play is that they include goals and a quantifiable outcome. These are constituent parts of a game and often one of the biggest game elements for eliciting the most powerful gameplay experiences. The system of a game, with goals, challenges, and uncertain outcomes, offer an environment in which choices can be integrated and can become meaningful. Although a *goal* is the object of an apparent reason for playing the game, they itself are artificial, formal constructs, that are accepted for an objective by the players. Goals are seldom achieved with ease. On the contrary, the player is given various tasks, with varying difficulty, which elicit various, parallel emotions during the gameplay. Goals help the player move throughout the space of possibility, from the beginning to the end of the game, and during the events and their uncertain outcomes. (Salen & Zimmerman, 2004.)

The pursuit for the final win condition of a game is called the macro-level goal. However, games include sources of pleasure at micro-level, as well. These are little situations of gameplay in which micro-interactions enable progression of the players in a game. (Salen & Zimmerman, 2004.) Situations of micro-level emerge when the players interact with the core mechanics repeatedly, and the experiences of the “same-but-different” sustains the desire and interest of the players, i.e. engagement in the game (Salen & Zimmerman, 2004, chapter 24, 15). The link between macro and micro levels are the short-term goals. As game has a final win condition, i.e. a long-term goal, the players are given short-term goals, as well. These types of goals elicit emotions that are more lingering than the gratifications of the micro-level interactions with the core mechanics, but faster acquired than the macro-level goal. The way these goals can be achieved varies from game to game and depends on how the different goals are designed between the core mechanics and winning. The short-term goals can be both intrinsic and extrinsic from the game.

Moreover, the player can invent these goals for themselves, or the game can encourage to this type of behavior. It is essential for the player to be familiar with the game world, and at best this gives the players a feeling of control in a game. There are many ways of creating control and goals in games, varying from different levels and time scales. These goals from low-level to higher-level are often accumulated and simultaneous. The combination of multiple goals, planning and acting based on it, and making the sense of the world are ways for player engagement, but it is a complex process. The long-term and short-term goals are sometimes intertwined. When the players are working towards them in a game, they are finding ways of progressing throughout the space of possibility. Short-term goals can be examined through two functions of experiential, which are the sources of pleasure. Firstly, players generate hypotheses about possible outcomes and plan how to proceed in a game with the help of short-term goals. Secondly, short-term goals give satisfaction when the objective is achieved by the player. (ibid.)

As pointed out, the experiences of pleasure and other emotions, such as suspense, build up from multiple interconnected parts. These occur in both macro and micro level, e.g. in interactions with core mechanics, in short-term goals and all the way to achieving the objective(s) of long-term goals (Salen & Zimmerman, 2004). All these intertwined parts link to the meaningful gameplay, as well. For example, the players can deduce to make meaningful choices than turn into meaningful actions that have both predictable and uncertain outcomes, that create meanings and emotions of their own. When the players progress in a game, they will have feelings of accomplishment and achievement, when they know that they are progressing towards the objective. (ibid.)

Conflict is a fundamental element of all games (Crawford, 1997; Salen & Zimmerman, 2004). Emerging from the rules, and through procedures of the game, that prevents the player from achieving goals, is called conflict. Every game includes goals and objectives that guide the players in these situations of conflict (Nacke, 2014). For example, the conflict of *Pong* (Atari, 1972) is to prevent the square-shaped object, i.e. the ball, crossing the boundaries of the screen. In games, there are commonly a total of three types of conflict. The first type of conflict is called an *obstacle*. Obstacles prevent players from achieving goals (Crawford, 1997; Salen & Zimmerman, 2004; Nacke, 2014). In general, obstacles can be categorized in many ways. Firstly, they can be static or passive: e.g. when the challenge is an athletic nature or a puzzle. Secondly, obstacles are called dynamic or active, when the challenge is a game. In these cases, the obstacles respond to

the players and an intelligent agent is required. When intelligent agent hinders the progression of the player in a game, for example, tries to prevent the player to reach her goals, the result is a conflict between the agent and the player. (Salen & Zimmerman, 2004) Obstacles can be in both mental or physical form (Nacke, 2014). Mental obstacles are familiar from e.g. adventure games, where it is common to seek for a missing item that completes a puzzle, for example. Physical obstacles are e.g. the length of the rectangular-shaped paddle in *Pong*, that is used to hit square-shaped object. The second type of conflict is an *opponent*. These are other players in a game, i.e. the players of the online game, or the non-player characters (NPC), that cannot be controlled directly by the player. The third type of conflict is a *dilemma*. (ibid.) Nacke (2014, para. 11) has defined it as “*a strategic decision, where the consequences have to be weighted before proceeding*”. In games, these are e.g. “*problematic choices*” that the player needs to deal with (Nacke, 2014, para. 11).

The fundamentality of conflict in games can be understood, when discussing the subject of games without conflict. The only way to avoid conflict in games is to eliminate “*the active response to the player’s actions*”. (Crawford, 1997, chapter 1, 8) If there is no active response the result is the lack of interaction. Thus, a game without conflict is not a game at all. (ibid.) According to Chris Crawford (1997, chapter 1, 8), “*Conflict implies danger; danger means risk of harm; harm is undesirable.*” All the mentioned things are not desired in real life, yet at the core of all games. In fact, games are a safe place to experience aspect familiar from real life (ibid.), such as conflict and suspense.

After discussing rules, goals, a quantifiable outcome and conflict, which form the essential formal elements of games (Salen & Zimmerman, 2004; Nacke, 2014), the concept of *choice* needs to be discussed. The concept itself is rather simple, but crucial in games, and especially in *TWD:SI*, in which numerous dialogue situations are based on the concept of choice. A noun of a word choice is defined as “*an act of choosing between two or more possibilities*” (Oxford dictionaries, 2019a). However, how choice leads to an action and eventually to an outcome, is a far more complex issue.

To analyse the “*anatomy of choice*” (Salen & Zimmerman, 2004, chapter 6, 8), a series of questions should be asked. Question number one asks: *What has happened?* This question includes all the elements and interactions that happened before the option of the choice was presented to the player. Question number two seek an answer on: *How the*

situation of choice is presented to the player? (ibid.) Different games present different situations. For example, in the dialogues of *TWD:SI* the system gives the player four options to choose from. When answering, the player needs to press one of the four buttons of the controller in order to make the choice (however not pressing the button is also a choice), which directly answers to question number three: *What is the mechanism to perform an action in a situation of choice?* (ibid.). Question number four asks: *What is the outcome of the choice?* Furthermore, it seeks an answer for what is the influence of it for the possible choices occurring next? (ibid.) This exact moment is at the core of suspense. A simple choice of a player influences directly on the events of the system (ibid.), which are both present, and upcoming. Finally, question number five asks: *How the outcome of the choice is presented?* (ibid.). For example, in the dialogues of *TWD:SI* the outcome is immediate and often in a form of an animation or a cut scene, where the player loses control and the system takes over. However, the results of the choice, which can be both “*micro-macro*” or “*macro-choices*”, influence not only on the events presently occurring, i.e. “*moment-to-moment interactivity*”, but also often on the future events, i.e. “*long-term progress of the game experience*”, as well (Salen & Zimmerman, 2004, chapter 6, 14). These events are uncertain for the player, eliciting suspense. After this, the process of anatomy of choice starts all over, as the next choice is based on the outcome of the previous choice (ibid.). The series of questions formulate “*the five stages of a choice*” (Salen & Zimmerman, 2004, chapter 6, 8). Stages 1, 3 and 4 relates to internal events, while stages 2 and 5 seeks answer to external events. The categorizing in two can be understand from the viewpoint of control: Internal events are controlled by the system, while external events are controlled by the player. (ibid.)

Lastly, the concept of game mechanic, i.e. the core mechanic, is discussed. A core mechanic is included in every game, and thus, is an essential interaction of a game (Salen & Zimmerman, 2004). This fundamental gameplay activity defines a game for being a game and the genre of the game (ibid.; Wolf, 2008). A core mechanic can be a simple action: a push of a single button on a controller resulting the player character to jump. It can also be a quite complex series of actions, including the mastery of the whole controller. Core mechanics elicit gameplay experience. Being often repeatable, this fundamental activity of the player creates “*patterns of behavior*” (Salen & Zimmerman, 2004, chapter 23, 4). Furthermore, the meaningful gameplay experience can be achieved with the series of meaningful choices done during the gameplay activity (ibid.).

2.3 Games as formal systems

Games are complex *systems*: a set of different elements enabling player interaction. All systems share a total of four elements: objects, attributes, their internal relationships, and the context of the system, i.e. the environment. Furthermore, systems can be closed or open, and can be examined, e.g. from the formal properties or different dimensions, such as cultural or social. (Crawford, 1997; Salen & Zimmerman, 2004; Nacke, 2014.) For better understanding games as systems, two well-known definitions are examined. Firstly: *“A system is a set of things that affect one another within an environment to form a larger pattern that is different from any of the individual parts.”* (Salen & Zimmerman, 2004, chapter 5, 2). Secondly: *“A game’s collection of parts which interact with each other, often in complex ways.”* (Crawford, 1997, chapter 1, 3).

The way to examine these definitions depends on the way the system is inspected. Firstly, when games are framed as formal systems, the set of things or parts can be defined as objects, i.e. elements and variables. Secondly, in an experiential system, the objects are also the players themselves. Thirdly, when games are studied as cultural systems, the object is the game itself. The qualities of these objects, or the system, are called attributes. (Salen & Zimmerman, 2004; Nacke, 2014). Furthermore, different objects are in an internal relationship with each other within the system and *“form a larger pattern that is different from any of the individual parts.”* (Salen & Zimmerman, 2004, chapter 5, 2).

The *environment* is the context in which the system operates: e.g. the game world, which is the visual representation of the system. However, games do not exist in a vacuum: systems can be cultural environments, which blurs the boundaries of the formal structure with different social and narrative aspects, to name a few (Salen & Zimmerman, 2004; Nacke, 2014.) The formal, experiential, and cultural systems can be framed and studied individually. However, the three different systems are integrated to each other, and the understanding of the interrelation of these systems are needed for better analysis (Salen & Zimmerman, 2004.)

On top of the formal, experiential and cultural, games through the lens of information theory systems should be discussed. Special attention to this type of a system is needed, because it intersects with the topics of suspense and meaningful gameplay, and can be used as a junction between suspense, meaningful gameplay, and video games, i.e. systems

(Salen & Zimmerman, 2004). Game design research has argued about games as information theory systems and the delicate balance between the right amount of freedom and about control in video games by stating, that “*a complex, emergent system can only exist somewhere between the rigidity of fixed, periodic systems and the hyperflexibility of chaotic systems.*” (Salen & Zimmerman, 2004, chapter 16, 9). On one hand, if the game is excessively structured, it results that the game is overly determined, as there is too little of freedom and uncertainty for the player. On the other hand, the lack of structure turns the game into chaos, as an excessive amount of freedom and uncertainty results that the player is unaware how to decide what to do for the game to progress. (ibid.) This notion intertwines with the experience of suspense as well, as uncertainty, with hope and fear, are at the core of suspense (Frome & Smuts, 2004; Järvinen, 2008; Van Vught & Schott, 2012), which is discussed thoroughly in chapter 5.

Information and uncertainty both connect to freedom, and this junction is at the heart of meaningful gameplay. This all boils down to the player’s ability to make choices in the system. When the system is excessively structured, the player has only a little freedom. This means that there are only a few choices, which results a lack of uncertainty about the possible outcome. Oppositely, the lack of structure results that the relationship between the action and the outcome is meaningless. If the outcome is constantly uncertain, no matter what the player’s action is has an influence on that uncertainty. All in all, if the system is too rigid or oppositely too chaotic, meaningful play is not possible. Instead, the system should offer a large enough space of possibility, yet limited, for players to form a decision and choose their actions. (Salen & Zimmerman, 2004.)

The connection between the topic of suspense and information theory is the notion of “*information measures uncertainty*” (Salen & Zimmerman, 2004, chapter 16, 10) and the possible messages contained in the act of communication is measured as information. For example, a question about a favourite video game includes more information and more uncertainty than a simple yes or no question, which includes only two possible answers.

Uncertainty, freedom of choice, and information link together. In a complex system of video games – that can be looked through the lenses of formal, experiential, cultural, or even as an information theory – the concept of choice is linked to the space of possibility and moreover, to meaningful gameplay. The key is in the delicate balance between the

right amount of freedom and control, uncertainty, and information in order to meaningful gameplay to occur. (Salen & Zimmerman, 2004.)

2.4 Storytelling in video games

Storytelling in video games has been a debatable issue, which has been underlined by the opposite camps of the Ludologists and the Narratologists (Juul 2005; Mukherjee, 2015). Even though a well-researched topic and not at the scope of this master's thesis on its entirety, this chapter introduces the concepts of storytelling, which are crucial for not only understanding games in general, but also cinematic, story-driven games, such as *TWD:SI*. The discussion of this chapter includes the interrelated concept of a plot, which is essential for understanding the various sides of the concept of storytelling and video games.

The noun *storytelling* means “*activity of telling or writing stories*” (Oxford dictionaries, 2018a). The concept originates from Ancient Greek and the writings of Aristotle in *Poetics* ca. 350 BCE. The use of different characters and unities of time, space, and action have all been used since and are still used in all media including games. (Whalley, 1997; Sheldon 2004.) However, it was not until the early 1970s that games could be defined as a storytelling medium. Text adventures paved the way for graphic adventures, action adventure and other popular genres, such as RPG and MMO. But by the end of the decade the definitions of games as a storytelling medium were already questioned and the debate between games as systems and games as story was ready to begin. (Costikyan 2007.) As discussed in chapter 2.1, both the Ludologists and the Narratologists understood the complexity of video games and that games could be analysed as texts (Aarseth, 1997; Murray, 1997; Mukherjee, 2015). Nevertheless, the storytelling properties of games have remained a debatable issue (Juul 2005; Mukherjee, 2015).

For example, Salen and Zimmerman (2004, chapter 7, 11) have defined games “*as a system in which players engage in an artificial conflict, defined by rules, that results in a quantifiable outcome.*” Furthermore, games are complex systems, which are constituted from different elements, e.g. goals and conflict, and mechanics enabling player interaction (Crawford, 1997; Salen & Zimmerman, 2004; Nacke, 2014). Although being suitable and highly inclusive, the definition is inadequate in the context of story-driven games, such as *TWD:SI*. A step towards defining the game under scrutiny is Jesper Juul's (2005) definition of games. He shares the notions above of games by stating that

games are firstly “*a rule-based system*”, secondly “*with a variable and quantifiable outcome*”, thirdly “*where different outcomes are assigned different values*” and fourthly “*the player exerts effort in order to influence the outcome*” (Juul, 2005, 6-7). However, he has additions to the definition. Juul emphasises that “*the player feels emotionally attached to the outcome*”, as well as, “*the consequences of the activity are optional and negotiable*” (Juul, 2005, 7). Furthermore, he introduces the concept of the duality of video games, meaning that games are half-real fictional worlds. This notion intertwines with the concepts of schemas, assemblages, genres, which all are discussed in chapter 3, and transmedial storytelling, which is discussed later in this chapter. Moreover, the inclusion of the concept of emotional attachment in the definition is useful for studying emotions, such as suspense. Juul’s (2005) definitions of games as systems also include system, players, conflict, rules, and a quantifiable outcome (Juul, 2005). Mukherjee (2015) and Sheldon (2004), for example, have further studied games from the storytelling point of view, where the role of the player is crucial. Games are systems in which the complex and intertwined activity of game, player and gameplay occurs, and from which different elements of a story, i.e. story elements, can also be categorized, on top of formal elements (Crawford, 1997; Zimmerman, 2004; Juul, 2005; Nacke, 2014; Mukherjee, 2015).

Similar as games as different systems intertwine with each other, storytelling can also evolve in overlapping environments. One of the prominent researchers of transmedia storytelling is Henry Jenkins, who defines it as:

“process where integral elements of a fiction get dispersed systematically across multiple delivery channels for the purpose of creating a unified and coordinated entertainment experience. Ideally, each medium makes its own unique contribution to the unfolding of the story.” (Jenkins, 2007, para. 1).

The stories in transmedia universes are often “*complex fictional worlds*” (Jenkins, 2007, para. 3), thus sharing the notion of Juul’s (2005) definition of games as half-real, fictional worlds. Furthermore, these worlds “*can sustain multiple interrelated characters and their stories*”, rather than bases on specific plots or individual characters that are used e.g. in narratives constructed classically (Jenkins, 2007, para. 3). Jenkins has argued that often the texts of transmedia leads to “*gaps or excesses in the unfolding of the story: that is, they introduce potential plots which can not be fully told or extra details which hint at more than can be revealed.*” (Jenkins, 2007, para. 10).

The study of storytelling has gradually evolved from linear towards nonlinear as the emergent of story and gameplay has become more common (Sheldon, 2004; Rabin, 2010; McIntosh et al., 2010). This has resulted that the writer of the game is no longer purely a storyteller, as the role has changed more as a “*narrative architect*” (Jenkins 2004, 121). This has increased the freedom of the players and changed the player’s role more to an author, as well. This freedom of the players can simply be playing the game within the guidelines of the game, or even making the game content themselves (Pearce 2004).

Linear storytelling is the traditional structure of storytelling, and progresses by predetermined sequential plot points from point A to B to C and all the way to the end, Z. In this structure there is a clear beginning, a middle and an end. This is a classic three-act structure including exposition, conflict, and resolution. As it has been used since Aristotle’s *Poetics* and being familiar to us all, it has been natural to use this structure in games also (Sheldon, 2004). *Linear* structure is familiar from e.g. adventure games. Even though the player can have the freedom of action and levels can be nonlinear, the story advances in a linear path. (Costikyan, 2007.) Linearity can break the immersion, a topic which is discussed later in chapter 4, and e.g. a difficult puzzle can stop the player’s progression. Players want freedom and linearity limits their action. On the other hand, writer can have a firm author’s grip by controlling the storyline. However, considering the interactive nature of games, linearity is not the only and certainly not the best way of structuring stories in games. (Sheldon 2004.)

First step towards nonlinearity is the *branching* structure, where linear storyline branches in some part of the game (Sheldon, 2004; Rabin 2010; McIntosh et al. 2010). There are three types of branching. First occurs in the endgame when the player is free to choose from alternative endings. The second happens in the beginning of the game. The third occurs somewhere in the middle of the game. The branches are meaningful, if they involve ethical decisions, and if the choices the player makes influence both the story and the game mechanics by, e.g. altering the game difficulty. Although having nonlinear elements, branching is a form of linear storytelling, because there is a path to follow that only branches and go back to the linear line. Nonetheless, the player has the control to choose from the predefined paths, but the control of the player is all about the illusion, because the writer does not give up on authorial control. (Sheldon, 2004.)

The *web* structure is the first truly nonlinear form of storytelling. It allows progression in more than one direction and breaks the linear pattern and the story can go from point A to C to B. Although web structure is not complex, it is more difficult to write, and it loosens the author's grip. It is useful transition to modular storytelling, as the story is designed in the same way as the gameplay is designed. (Sheldon, 2004.)

Rabin (2010, 148) has refined previous theories to *branching* and *modified branching plots*, which are often referred to as *parallel paths*. The first branching occurs in the beginning of the game, but this is problematic because the paths can grow exponentially. Often it is a waste of resources, because there are game elements to be created that some of the players will never experience even if they replay the game several times. Ultimately, the structure of the story is still linear. The modified branching plots can happen in the middle of the game, when the path branches and leads back again, or at the endgame with alternative endings. (Rabin, 2010.)

Similarly, McIntosh et al. (2010) have defined branching nonlinear stories as either one of two styles: firstly, as a tree branching out with different end points; and secondly, as converging or diverging plot lines resembling parallel roads to the same destination. The first one is defined as the *branching narrative*. Even though hard to implement due it takes a lot of time with designing, writing, and programming, and it costs a lot of money, branching narrative gives the player more options to change the overall direction of narrative. One example of this type of game is *Heavy Rain* (Quantic Dream, 2010), where the player's actions during the game lead to different endings. McIntosh et al. (2010) also introduces the *parallel narrative*, which is a form of branching happening in the middle of the game.

The *modular storytelling* structure is the true integration of the story and the gameplay. Unlike in earlier examples, this structure includes no paths. To fully understand this structure the term module needs to be explained. The modular structure is made of modules from A to Z. These modules can be any of the story elements: scenes, levels, videos, characters encounters, puzzles etc. In a modular structure all the modules are adjustable. In addition, the story is not tied up to an individual scene and the story elements can be moved around in the story world and are dependent on player actions. (Sheldon, 2004.) The player has the freedom to explore the story how she pleases, which can be extremely immersive (Rabin 2010). It may seem that there is no authorial control

as the players are in control and doing different choices and making their own story from A to Z. However, the freedom of choice is only an illusion. As the modular structure is invisible to the player, the writer can force moments on the player at will, and, in the end all the players end up in an exact point in the story. (Sheldon, 2004.)

Sheldon (2004) also introduces the *nesting modules*, which are basically modules in modules. Written especially from the game design point of view, the largest module can be the entire game world, which can include as many smaller modules such as stories and different story elements such as characters, quests, encounters, puzzles etc. Each of these modules can also be made up of smaller modules. (Sheldon, 2004). A more commonly used term, *open world*, shares similarities with modular storytelling structure or nesting modules. Open world means that the player has freedom to encounter different stories and story elements in any order. (McIntosh et al., 2010.)

Rabin (2004, 148) writes about *nonlinear plots*, a form of storytelling that happens in a sandbox game, where the player can manipulate the environment with a set of tools. Content is made up of goals, objectives, and stories that are built by the players for themselves in any order and it is what the player feels and thinks during playing what creates the story (ibid.). Games that are structured as nesting modules or nonlinear plots are more commonly described as emergent gameplay (McIntosh et al. 2010).

Lastly, *quasilinear plots* occurs when the game combines both linear and nonlinear plots together (Rabin, 2010). This keeps the player happy with the sense of freedom while keeping the authorial control of the system, by integrating the linear gameplay into a nonlinear world. For example, it may seem that the player can access freely the entire game world, but the missions needs to be done in a specific order. All the players experience the same basic story with the same cut scenes, and no matter what the decision or action of the player character, the ending of the game is the same. This type of storytelling can be very useful in giving the player the sense of control while keeping the story constrained. A good example of these is the *Grand Theft Auto* series, which is often referred as a sandbox game, as well. Another example of a game that uses elements of a linear plot without being truly linear, is *Far Cry 2* (Ubisoft Montreal, 2008), where the character can move away from the main plot to move through subplots and side quests. Some of these subplots and side quests are necessary for advancement, and some are not.

These aspects raise the interactive feeling of the game and make them feel very open, but nonetheless they offer linear progression. (Rabin 2010.)

Having tackled the issue of storytelling in video games, next the concept of *plot* is discussed. The foundation for understanding the multi-faceted nature of video games is in the notion that narratives are everywhere, all around us (Fludernik, 2009). However, this does neither mean that everything is a story, nor do all games tell stories (Juul, 2001). Every game, nevertheless, includes a plot. The noun plot is “*the main events of a play, novel, film, or similar work, devised and presented by the writer as an interrelated sequence.*” (Oxford dictionaries, 2018b). As a verb, plot is defined: “*Devise the sequence of events in (a play, novel, film, or similar work)*” (Oxford dictionaries, 2018b). In addition, in the definition of narrativity is the minimal definition of a plot: “*the presence of at least two actions or events in chronological order which stands in some kind of relation to one another.*” (Fludernik, 2009, 158). From the nature of ‘interrelated’ and ‘chronological’ of “*at least two actions or events*” (Fludernik, 2009, 158), even the simplest and abstract games can be presented in a form of a plot. For example, the plot of *Tetris* (1984) can be defined as ‘combining falling bricks’, or the plot of *Pong* as ‘hitting the ball (square) with the pad (rectangle)’. Thus, every game indeed includes a plot. However, what makes the formation of a story a difficult task in *Tetris*, is that there is not a player character or a visible actor in the game (Juul, 2001). This is different compared to other abstract games, such as *Pong*, where the player can imagine to be a player moving the pad (rectangle) and trying to hit the ball (square).

The storytelling of games functions when the plot is simple. Furthermore, the player needs to comprehend the plot immediately (Perron, 2009). Peter Brooks (1984) has argued about the nature of plot and has categorized it to *proairetic* and *hermeneutic*. Briefly, the first one is “*code of actions*”, and the latter one is “*code of enigmas and answers*” (Brooks, 1984, 287). Brooks’ definitions give insight to multiple structures of plots and their relationship to concepts, such as suspense. The notion of “*significance of actions*” (Brooks, 1984, 287) is closely related to the concept of meaningful actions. Similarly, as discussed by Brooks (1984), video games have a code of actions which guide the player in the process of gameplay. The hermeneutic, i.e. “*enigmas and answers*” (Brooks, 1984, 287) are at the heart of games e.g. anatomy of choice (Salen & Zimmerman, 2004), where the uncertainty of the events influence on the player finding the answers for enigmas the

gameplay presents. The plot guides the whole experience of the game as well as motivates the player for action and making choices (Perron, 2009).

2.5 Games as texts

As formal systems and storytelling approaches have begun to merge as a unified field of game studies, arguments of the nature of video games have taken a more holistic view. Several scholars, such as Consalvo and Dutton (2006), Fernández-Vara (2015), and Mukherjee (2015), have emphasised a synthesis of video games, where both the game's elements of story and formal, and the environment intertwined create the gameplay experience. Because of the special characteristics of which video games are constituted, they cannot be understood solely with the traditional methods. Furthermore, some scholars have called new ways for the textual analysis of video games (Consalvo and Dutton, 2006; Fernández-Vara, 2015; Mukherjee, 2015). The qualitative textual analysis conducted in this master's thesis is a part of continuum of these new approaches.

As discussed before, games are complex systems, and the study of games includes multiple topics, which intersect with each other (Salen & Zimmerman, 2004; Mäyrä, 2009; Mukherjee, 2015; Lankoski & Björk, 2015). In this chapter, different topics, which are crucial for understanding video games as texts, are discussed. Even though the topics discussed are especially applicable when viewing through lens of textuality, they are useful for understanding games as formal systems and from the storytelling point of view, as well. These aspects highlight the interconnected nature of video games.

Games can be analysed as texts and the understanding of this enable discourse on video games on specific topics (Clara Fernández-Vara, 2015). People tend “*to make sense of texts*” even “*without formal training*”, such as via conversations about films or sports with friends, calling it as “*natural curiosity*” (Clara Fernández-Vara, 2015, 9). The etymology of the term *text* is in the Latin word *textus*, which means “*tissue of a literary work, that which is woven or a web*” (Mukherjee, 2015, 30; Oxford dictionaries, 2019b). By etymology, text is both linked to machine and even machinic itself, and thus, can be considered as an artefact. Being a *machinic* entity, text attaches to the identity of the reader. However, understanding the machinic text structures is required before able to read it. Cypertext and hypertext, which origins from the textual forms related to

computers, have different characteristics than earlier forms of textuality. (Mukherjee, 2015.)

The term *hypertext* was coined in the 1960s by Theodore Nelson, and is used to describe *lexia*, alternatively blocks of texts, or images, connected by combination of hyperlinks, where the *reader* is the constructor of the text (Mukherjee, 2015). Further research of the term resulted the development of the word *wreading* (ibid.), which is discussed more thoroughly in chapter 4.3. Although hypertexts are texts requiring active reader, or *wreader*, they are nevertheless similar as the printed texts (Montfort, 2001; Mukherjee, 2015). The main differences of them are in their specific affordances of media and the limitations are partially or entirely founded on their “*media-specificity of the machinic text.*” (Mukherjee, 2015, 52). Aarseth (1997) criticises the earlier theories of hypertext and questions the term of *wreading*. He was the first to use the term *cypertext*, which “*denotes not all possible networks of lexia, but the more general set of text machines*” (Montfort, 2001, para. 2). These machines present different texts for the reader based on how the reader operates these text machines (ibid.). Cypertext is a broader category than hypertext, which is operated by clicking and traversing hyperlinks, and the biggest accomplishment of Aarseth’s Cypertext (1997) was to reshape the boundaries of these type of texts (Montfort, 2001). However, the cypertext theory cannot be discussed without critique. By defining cypertext as medium-independent, Aarseth quietly ignores that all texts can be hypertexts (ibid.; Mukherjee, 2015). The concept of cypertext is problematic in other ways, as well. The reasons for this are both the exclusiveness of the concept and that it was relevant “*at the high point of computer gaming when Cypertext was written.*” (Mukherjee, 2015, 62). In addition, the denialism of cybertext towards narrative aspects raised multiple issues that partially led to the debate between Ludologists and Narratologists (ibid.). For understanding modern video games, a more applicable theories and concepts are needed.

Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (2004) has discussed, for example, the theories and concepts of assemblage, schema and machinic in the context of textuality. Mukherjee (2015) has further investigated these concepts in the context of both the traditional media and video games and have found entry points that are applicable in the study of different media. Even though the Deleuzoquattarian concepts are especially applicable from the storytelling point of view, they open new ways of analysing the whole experience of gameplay, as well.

Text is a machinic entity, which attaches to the identity of the reader (Mukherjee, 2015). In the Deleuzoguattarian sense, *machinic* is: “*the relationship between the heterogenous elements in an assemblage and this does not imply that machines are necessarily mechanical.*” (Mukherjee, 2015, 9). Furthermore, “*even thought is machinic*” (Mukherjee, 2015, 9). The relationship of the body and the machine is fluid and are linked to each other intrinsically. This implies that any text is machinic entity: whether it is in a traditional form of storytelling, e.g. a novel, or in a form of a video game. (ibid.)

As discussed in the beginning of this chapter, by etymology, the term text means “*tissue of a literary work, that which is woven or a web*” (Mukherjee, 2015, 30). The woven tissue of e.g. literature is connected to the material object, such as paper, or even papyrus (Mukherjee, 2015). However, this is not restricted by constraints of physicality (ibid.) and “*the page nowadays continues*” (Derrida, 2005, 46) remediating in Notebooks, for example. In fact, paper has always been a virtual multimedia with an opportunity of multiple text. (ibid.). Jacques Derrida’s notion of “*future anterior*”, which “*liberate our reading*” (Derrida, 2005, 47), is useful in discussing the textuality of different media (Mukherjee, 2015). For Derrida, textuality is characterised by “*non-belonging to a specific present*” (Mukherjee, 2015, 30), and “*the text is both the reflection of its past as well as the anticipation of its future forms.*” (Mukherjee, 2015, 30). With this logic, new media and video games can be understood as texts, “*which actualise the multimedia vectors that are anterior to the existence of the physical constraints of paper*” (Mukherjee, 2015, 30) i.e. reflecting the earlier texts’ properties. Furthermore, it can be deduced, that “*paper-based texts also anticipate digital games in their multimedia vectors*” (Mukherjee, 2015, 30).

Both video games and printed texts are equally machinic. They share similarities by being capable of generating a several texts using several media. (Mukherjee, 2015.) Although video games can be called as texts, they should not be mistakenly considered as “*merely a development of paper*”, as Derrida (2005, 47) points out. Video games are, in their technicity, still unique and separate medium. The text of the video game, particularly, shows the capabilities of the story itself to be played and narrated in ways that might be even better than any of the older forms of game or text (Mukherjee, 2015). The video game text illustrates the “*originary machinicity*” of both narrative and game (Mukherjee, 2015, 71).

A closely related concept to text is *semiotics*, which briefly is about studying how meaning is formed and the processes in it (Princeton, 2018). The concept is based on Ferdinand de Saussure's theories of system of signs in the early 20th century, and have influences many scholars that have studied, e.g. meaning making, such as Roland Barthes (1990) and Jacques Derrida (Salen & Zimmerman, 2004). The ability to understand signs is at the core of studying semiotics. Signs are "*markers of meaning*" and are the "*basic unit*" of studying semiotics (Salen & Zimmerman, 2004, chapter 4, 5).

The study of semiotics is about what these signs represent and denote, as well as the ways of how these meanings are produced. For semiotics, every form of media is a text, which is made up of meaningful signs, e.g. designated ideas or objects. Furthermore, the users of media texts are readers. What these signs represent and how they are interpreted, is connected to the individual's capability to understand these signs. These signs are representations of something else than itself, and the representations become the meaning of these signs. (Salen & Zimmerman, 2004; Princeton, 2018.)

There are four concepts that are useful for understanding semiotics. Firstly, the representation of a sign is something else than itself. For example, different elements (defined here in all its inclusiveness) of games, are considered as signs. These elements can be objects, gestures, or behaviours, to name a few. Secondly, a sign is interpreted. In games, the active role of the player leads to interpreting the signs of the game. Thirdly, the interpretation of signs leads to meaning. For example, the connections of different elements lead to meaning making in games. Fourthly, the interpretation is shaped by the context. Environment, or as in video games, the game world influences the interpretation. For example, video games are structured in a set of rules that regulate the relationship of signs and the combination of signs. (Salen & Zimmerman, 2004.)

3 THE MANY SIDES OF GAMES

This chapter discusses concepts which are important for understanding the complex meaning making systems of video games. The following concepts are discussed separately, but they all intertwine not only with the formal, storytelling, and textual aspects of games, but also with the topics of player, games, and gameplay.

At first, Deleuzoguattarian concepts of schema and assemblage are discussed. The topic of schema highlights the viewpoints of formal, experiential, and cultural from which video games can be examined (Salen & Zimmerman, 2004). Concept of assemblage, which intersects with the concept of ensemble (Ermi & Mäyrä, 2005), is crucial for understanding the complexity of gameplay experience (Mukherjee, 2015), as well as different interrelated aspects, such as plugging in, which is discussed in chapter 3.2, and multiplicity, which is discussed in chapter 3.2 and 4.5. In addition, both plugging in and multiplicity are discussed more thoroughly in chapter 7.2 in the context of *TWD:SI*. In chapters 3.3 and 3.4, the topic of genre is discussed, and the emphasis is on the various aspects of defining genre. The chapters introduces how genres influence in different audiences and conventions, as well as define *TWD:SI*.

3.1 Schema

The concept of *schema* has its origin in the Ancient Greek (Whalley, 1997; Salen & Zimmerman, 2004). It was used by Plato to describe “*important rather than exhaustive information*” and the concept’s primary characteristic is summarization (Salen & Zimmerman, 2004, chapter 10, 2). According to Salen & Zimmerman (2004, chapter 1, 4) “*a schema is a way of framing and organizing knowledge*”. Firstly, it is for understanding information. The game design schemas are for understanding different aspects of games, that are formal, experiential, and cultural. Secondly, schemas are flexible: “*they can represent knowledge at different levels of abstraction*” and “*can be embedded in each other*” (Salen & Zimmerman, 2004, chapter 10, 3). Thirdly, “*schema represent knowledge, rather than definitions*” (Salen & Zimmerman, 2004, chapter 10, 3). Schemas can be used as lenses to study the complexity of games in agile ways (ibid.).

Schemas that are categorised as formal are related to rules and can be looked through two formal lenses. Firstly, rules “*are the inner, essential structures that constitute the real-world objects known as games*” (Salen & Zimmerman, 2004, chapter 10, 4), i.e. a fundamental element in games constituting the central form of games. Secondly, rules can be inspected through the concept of formalization, which refers to “*the idea that there is something methodical and precise about looking at games as rules*” (Salen & Zimmerman, 2004, chapter 10, 4). The formal schemas are analytical, and often containing a mathematical component (ibid.).

The concept of games intersects profoundly with play (Salen & Zimmerman, 2004; Mäyrä, 2009; Mukherjee, 2015). Even though many things can be played besides games, e.g. a radio or a violin, play and games have a relationship that is unique. Play schemas are experiential, meaning that they are related to the experience of players (Salen & Zimmerman, 2004). Simply put, play exists as an experience (Mäyrä, 2009; Mukherjee, 2015). While it is possible to analyse the formal system without understanding the experiential aspects, the same is not possible vice versa. When looking through the lenses of experiential schemas, both the rules and the context in which the rule-system elicit experiences for the player needs to be considered. These can be, for example, narrative or social experiences, or experiences of emotions, such as suspense. Although schemas of play contain a far more expansive and complex aspects than rules, experiential schemas have boundaries as well (Salen & Zimmerman, 2004). The environment of games, e.g. the game world in video games, are set “*in definite locales of time and space.*” (Salen & Zimmerman, chapter 10, 4.)

When looked through the lens of culture, the overlapping of the game world and the real world becomes evident, as the focus of the game extends to the external aspects. Schemas that stretch the boundaries of these two worlds are called contextual schemas. The angle of culture adds another layer for understanding games: from the viewpoints of design, or meaningful gameplay, for example (Salen & Zimmerman, 2004). Cultural schemas, while intertwining with the formal and experiential, are used for looking the multiple ways of how “*games on culture*” and “*culture on games*” are manifested (Salen & Zimmerman, 2004, chapter 10, 4). The role of context is crucial in game studies. It is the surrounding space, which exists outside the game system. In fact, “*a context is the environment of the game system*” (Salen & Zimmerman, 2004, chapter 10, 4). Context is useful for defining the game system and for generating the boundaries of the game system. (Ibid.)

3.2 Assemblage

Assemblage is a concept of poststructuralist's Gilles Deleuze's and Felix Guattari's (2004). Originally, they used the French word *agencement*, which can be translated in English as *assemblage* (Mukherjee, 2015; DeLanda 2016). However, something is lost in the translation. Terminologically, *agencement* means “*the action of matching or fitting together a set of components (agencer), as well as to the result of such an action: an ensemble of parts that mesh together well.*” (DeLanda, 2016, 1). According to Merriam-Webster (2018a), the term *assemblage* means “*a collection of persons or things*”, thus ignoring the process and only including the product (DeLanda, 2016).

On top of the problems with the translation, the definitions of *agencement/assemblage* are manifold, and defining the concept accurately is difficult. In fact, Deleuze and Guattari had numerous definitions for *agencement/assemblage*, and differences occurred because of the concept's many characteristics (Mukherjee, 2015; DeLanda 2016). In the context of video games, there are two different definitions of *agencement/assemblage*, that are useful. First one describes that:

“with the senses of either ‘arrangement’, ‘fitting’ or ‘fixing’”, and “one would speak of the arrangement of parts of a body or machine; one might talk of fixing (fitting or affixing) two or more parts together; and one might use the term for both the act of fixing and the arrangement itself” (Phillips, 2006, 108).

Another way of demarcating the issue of *agencement/assemblage*, is to define what it is not:

“An assemblage is not a set of predetermined parts (such as pieces of a plastic model aeroplane) that are then put together in order to or into an already-conceived structure (the model aeroplane). Nor is an assemblage a random collection of things, since there is a sense that an assemblage is a whole of some sort that possesses some identity.” (McGregor-Wise, 2005, 77; ref. Mukherjee, 2015, 15-6).

The definitions of *assemblage* by Phillips (2006) and McGregor-Wise (2005) bring relevancy to video games which structures are not foreconceived nor random. Video games should be understood as an *assemblage* of various aspects instead of binaries which have been the way of e.g. explaining the storytelling in video games with traditional

methods of literature. Moreover, a more appropriate way of studying video games is a multiplicity of assemblages. (Mukherjee, 2015.)

Poststructuralists, such as Derrida (2005) and Deleuze and Guattari (2004), have emphasised the text's characteristic of multiplicity and, the study of games have further linked text with the process of play (Mukherjee, 2015). In the context of video games, where the technological aspect cannot be ignored, the text should be understood as machinic, yet not necessarily mechanical, entity (ibid.). In a Deleuzoguattarian sense, the machinic is the relationship of the elements in an assemblage (ibid.), or in an ensemble, which link the experience in virtual environments to all other experiences of humans (Ermi & Mäyrä, 2005). Furthermore, any kind of text is machinic (Mukherjee, 2015).

Video games are embodiments of complex structures and they do not exist in a vacuum (Salen & Zimmerman, 2004; Apperley, 2006). Not only the multiplicity of video games is in the games themselves, e.g. in different endings, but also video games are simultaneously connected to various assemblages, such as cultural, social, political, and economic. Thus, a way to understand the complexity of video games is to inspect them as a multiplicity of assemblages (Mukherjee, 2015). During the process of gameplay, the player and the machine take part "*in the ludic action in an intrinsic relationship*" (Mukherjee, 2015, 14). This gameplay activity is simultaneously of a singular and a multiplicity. The nature of the machine is intertwined, including both the rules of the game and the algorithm, which is coded. The same foundational relationship occurs between the story and the game, as well. (Ibid.)

An assemblage sharing similarities with video games are mobile phones. When introduced for the first time, mobile phones, as well as video games, had a restricted role. At first, mobile phones were used as telephones, and their potential for other tasks and add-ons, such as applications and cameras, were not realised. They were a merely a prosthetic for verbal communication, similarly as consoles and computers were considered as prosthetic of play. Nowadays, the use of mobile phones has changed in a way, that the terms hand-becoming-phone or phone-becoming-hand has been used. Mobile phones, or smart phones, can be considered as assemblages, that can be used to plug into various other assemblages than merely telephony, such as games, television, radio and internet. Continuing the comparison, video games also are assemblages. Not only they are assemblages of games, but they are also assemblages of stories. In addition,

video games can be assemblages of both the economical and the political platforms, to name only a few. Moreover, video games plug into these assemblages as they plug into the player and the machine. (Mukherjee, 2015). In the Deleuzoquattarian sense, plugging in is *“a multidirectional process wherein any entity may form flexible and variable attachments with others.”* (Mukherjee, 2015, 16) Similarly to agencement, the Deleuzoquattarian concept of assemblage, Manuel DeLanda has argued that *“a component part of an assemblage may be detached from it and plugged into a different assemblage in which its interactions are different.”* (Mukherjee, 2015, 16).

A concept, which closely relates to assemblage and is used in game studies, is ensemble. As discussed above, assemblage has been defined as a collection of persons, components, parts, things or aspects (Deleuze & Guattari, 2004; McGregor-Wise, 2005; Phillips, 2006; Mukherjee, 2015; DeLanda, 2016; Merriam-Webster 2018a). The concept of ensemble is a subtle step towards the context of games, as the defining word is elements, which link the experience in virtual environments to all other experiences of humans (Ermi & Mäyrä, 2005). Ensemble, as defined by Ermi and Mäyrä (2005, 2), is:

“made up of the player’s sensations, thoughts, feelings, actions, and meaning-making in a gameplay setting. Thus it is not a property or a direct cause of certain elements of a game but something that emerges in a unique interaction process between the game and the player.”

The definition of ensemble is an important addition not only to the concept of assemblage, but also on defining the complexity of gameplay experience by highlight the aspects of *“sensations, thoughts, feelings, actions, and meaning-making”*, and the intertwined relationship of the player and the game (Ermi & Mäyrä, 2005, 2).

3.3 Genre

Genres are used for classification in descriptive nature (Berger, 2018). The noun genre is defined as *“a style or category of art, music, or literature”* (Oxford dictionaries, 2018c). Originally a French term from the early 19th century, genre means literally a kind or gender (ibid.; Berger, 2018). However, the origin of genre theories is from Roman and Ancient Greek, and the Platonic theory of imitation, *mimemis*, being the first one to shape the genre conventions (Whalley, 1997; Farrell, 2003). Later, Aristotle further attempted

to define genre among several other concepts of literature (Whalley, 1997; Farrell, 2003; Berger, 2018), that have echoed to this day's media and game studies (Sheldon, 2004).

Defining genre has been problematic (Farrell, 2003; Berger, 2018). The genre distinctions of Ancient Greek were a simple dualistic notion between metrical form and ethos, and ignored the notion that a certain poem, for example, could belong to two different genres simultaneously. The problems aroused as the poets of Ancient Greek themselves were the best to define genres and they failed to meet equal counterparts for argumentations from the contemporary critics. The matching critique is then done, for example, from the era of 19th century by Derrida, and the modern theorists of genres tend to speak more about cross-genres. (Farrell, 2003.) The notions of mixing and crossing genres is commonly agreed nowadays (ibid.; Berger, 2018). These are used in television shows and movies (Berger, 2018), as well as in video games (Sheldon, 2004). Essentially, if the categorization system of genres would function perfectly, there should be a finite number of different genres where every tv-show, movie or video game would fit in accordingly. However, this is seldom possible, resulting a variety of mixed genres, which in turn results in ambiguity and complexity. (Berger, 2018.)

Genres are studied in multiple contexts. The texts of different mass medium with enormous audiences, e.g. television and video games, are constructed in a way that they are easily comprehended by these audiences. In other words, the texts of mass medium are formulaic, and the users of the medium, such as the viewers of tv-shows or the players of games, have grown accustomed with the conventions of the specific medium and their genres. Furthermore, texts of mass media can be positioned in a continuum of from invention to convention. Invention includes organizing texts in new ways, whereas convention includes formulaic, and often organizing texts in repeatable ways. The conventions vary from genre to another but acknowledging the basic conventions, i.e. formulas, of different narrative texts aids for categorizing genres. These are subclasses of a genre, and can be a variety of things, such as location and era of the story, themes, the appearance of different characters, and e.g. weaponry of characters, to name only a few (Berger, 2018). Moreover, familiarity with different conventions enables the audiences into different kinds of meaning making, especially when the audience is familiar with the representation of the specific genre. Audiences take pleasure in many ways, and e.g. identify to characters and understand their behavior and motivations (ibid.).

As defined at the beginning of this chapter, genres are used for classification in descriptive nature. Beside this basic function, there are multiple other functions that make genres as systems of significance and meaning (Berger, 2018). As mentioned before, genres mix with each other (Farrell, 2003). They borrow conventions, e.g. narrative texts, that leads to new, mixed genres. This in turn, has increased problems in many ways on defining genres. Especially from the television point of view, the problems have arisen from technological aspects, production styles and intertextuality. In addition, genre categories function as both socio-cultural ways and ways of human experience. For example, comedies are not merely for laughs only. Instead, they present an arena for e.g. unveiling different standards and rules that are left undetected in normal life. Furthermore, different genres deal with different themes and issues (Berger, 2018). Genres are more than descriptions: “they are ways of thinking about the world” (Berger, 2018, para. 16). In addition, genres are often shared or blended, and different ways of thinking move across lines of social and cultural, making genres familiar with the audiences globally (ibid.).

3.4 Genres of *The Walking Dead: Season 1*

As introduced in the previous chapter, the topic of genre is multisided, originating from the Ancient Greek (Whalley, 1997; Farrell, 2003; Berger, 2018). The reasons to go all the way to Ancient Greek and to introduce the work of philosophers is two-fold. Firstly, understanding the history of the theories is the foundation in media and game studies. During the time span of over two millennia, the theories that have been put in practice in poems, novels, films, and nowadays in video games, have influenced us all in the Western society as the continuum from invention to convention have occurred. All of us have learned at least all the basic conventions of the most popular narrative texts that label genres (Farrell, 2003; Sheldon, 2004; Berger, 2018). When we watch, for example, a typical romance film made in Hollywood, we can relax and enjoy the feeling of knowing that there is a happy ending, even though the events during the film might not support this. Secondly, the lengthy discussion here is done because of the nature of the video game under inspection: *TWD:SI*. When examining the game more closely, it quickly becomes evident that there are both some incongruity on the definitions, and the definitions are manifold. *TWD:SI* simply does not fit neatly into any definition of a video game genre, but rather there are similarities that can be found from multiple genres. One of the problems with *TWD:SI*, and video games sharing similar characteristics, is that it

is fundamentally story-based. For example, in Wikipedia – which is used here as a reference to emphasise how the audiences define *TWD:SI* – it is described as “*an episodic interactive drama graphic adventure survival horror video game*” (The Walking Dead 2018, para. 1). This lengthy description of genres underlines the multisided nature of the game, and address the need for the thorough discussion of all the aspects of *TWD:SI*, which are needed for the textual analysis presented in this master’s thesis. Furthermore, the complexity of genres that mix and overlap creates problems. Video games are hard to define precisely and we are accustomed to use lengthy definitions that mix thematics, iconography, and game mechanics. The above definition is intended to be descriptive, yet it opens venue for argumentation, as well. One of the problems of this lengthy description is that there can be separated the theme, and the game mechanic in multiple ways, resulting a mixture of genres.

Whereas other media e.g. films take on genres is more on their representational aspects, genres in video games should be categorized differently (Apperley, 2006). As discussed in chapter 2.2, the genre of video game is defined by game’s core gameplay elements (Salen & Zimmerman, 2004; Wolf, 2008). In the case of *TWD:SI*, these are exploration, navigation, tool usage, puzzles and action. The first four gameplay elements will label the game as an adventure, and the last gives the action-prefix of the game, which are discussed more thoroughly later in this chapter. However, considering the other central elements of *TWD:SI*, that are presented in the Wikipedia description as well (The Walking Dead 2018), defining the game is not this straight-forward. The best way to tackle the issue is to go through the lengthy description bit by bit. For example, *TWD:SI* has an episodic structure, which is described in the official web-site of Telltale Games as “*a story-based TV show, the game will tell a complete story arc over the course of a season*” (Episodic, 2019). The game consists of five episodes, which are all included in the qualitative textual analysis presented in this master’s thesis. In fact, the game borrows several conventions familiar from films. Firstly, it has a predefined linear branching storyline, which influences both the authorship of the story and the structure of the storyline of each time the game is played. Creating dramatic arc, for example, is a central element borrowed from other media that is used in *TWD:SI* in eliciting emotions, such as suspense. Secondly, the cinematography, e.g. camera angles and compositions, is familiar from films. Thirdly, the use of sounds, e.g. in eliciting emotions, is also familiar from

films. The above, that culminates e.g. in the numerous dialogue situations and multiple cut-scenes has resulted that *TWD:SI* includes elements of interactive movie, as well.

In this master's thesis, the genre of *TWD:SI* is defined as *survival-horror-action-adventure*, without neglecting the elements of *interactive movie* of the game. There are a couple of reasons for this approach. Even though the definition is lengthy, it is specific enough and descriptive, which is the basic definition of genre. In addition, it informs well enough what type of a video game *TWD:SI* is. Moreover, it describes not only the mixture of genres of the game, but also the theme (survival-horror) and the primary game mechanics (action-adventure) of the game. It also includes the continuum from invention to convention of genres. The four-parted description of *survival-horror-action-adventure* emphasis the audience's role also, as the definition shares similarities with the Wikipedia-definition presented earlier (The Walking Dead 2018). However, defining *TWD:SI* is insufficient without properly explaining the four-parted description. That is why the combination of genres of action-adventure and survival-horror are more thoroughly explained next.

Although action-adventure can be labelled as unified genre, the characteristics of *TWD:SI* is understood better when the two-parted definition is discussed separately. The core of the *adventure* game is "*the game's world and the player's use and experience of it.*" (Wolf, 2008, 81). The game is constructed of multiple connected screens, locations or rooms. The world of the game takes the role of an *antagonist*, which the player, the *protagonist*, tries to overcome by exploration and gaining access to hidden areas by using tools provided by the game world. Characters of adventure can normally carry different objects, e.g. tools, keys, and weapons. Settings of the adventure game are often related thematically to certain genres, such as fantasy or science fiction (ibid.). *Puzzle* is, both a game genre, and an essential element of adventure games, which needs to be solved in gaming encounters. Puzzles are often completed in a series of steps, underlined with increased complexity and can include an element of time limit. Puzzles are constructed in a way that the players need to navigate and explore in the game world to find clues and interpret them. As puzzles are spread out in different locations in the game world, the connections of cause and effect are sometimes unclear, which increases the difficulty and uncertainty. These types of sub-tasks are key elements of the adventure game genre and are central to the objective of the game, as well as for the playing experience itself. (Sellers, 2006; Wolf 2008). Borrowing conventions and elements from different games

and genres back and forth have influenced to the formation of whole new genres as well as blurred the boundaries of the adventure game genre over the years. This makes the definition of the adventure game genre more complex than it was before. Nevertheless, the central elements of the adventure games origin from the late 1970s, including exploration, navigation, and tool use, as well as puzzles, are still essential to the adventure game genre. (Wolf 2008.)

Action is a fundamental element in all games (Aarseth, 1997; Salen & Zimmerman, 2004; Ermi & Mäyrä, 2005; Mukherjee, 2015). *Action* is also used for labelling a certain genre of video games, which sub-genres are 3rd person games and 1st person shooters (Apperley, 2006). The term action is used here as a supplementary prefix for adventure genre, which is applicable when discussing games such as *TWD:SI*. The concept of action has been discussed throughout this master's thesis in the context of choice, for example, which is the "*smallest unit of interactivity*" in games (Wolf, 2008, 24). The relation of choice and action is better understood when discussing games with core mechanics based on action. For example, the simplest of action games offers a limited set of choices, but the game space can be broad. Typically, these limitations are simply moving the object of interactivity in limited directions and shooting the opponent. Conversely, games may provide a vast amount of options in events, but the number of correct choices is limited. (ibid.). For example, in *TWD:SI* there are many events, which rely heavily on action, as well as mix other genres. These events include e.g. zombies (game element) approaching (game mechanic), when the player character (agent) is trying to solve (game mechanic) a puzzle (game element) within a time limit (game element). This type of situation can lead to an *action sequence*, which may include pressing the correct button of the controller, often repeatedly, at the right spot of the screen and at the right time. This underlines the nature of action games, which "*are often intensively performative*", which differentiates this type of games from other "*performative games*" (Apperley, 2006, 15). Furthermore, the choices of the player influence directly on the gameplay and on the storyline. These events often include "choices matter" situations, which influence in the future events of the game (discussed more thoroughly in chapters 6.2 and 7). *TWD:SI* is also a 3rd person game. It borrows conventions from cinema, which are based on "*the literary definitions of narration*" (Apperley, 2006, 15), thus blurring and expanding the genre boundaries that are typical for action games (Apperley. 2006; Wolf, 2008).

The strongest and oldest emotion that humans have experienced is fear (Perron, 2009). The genre of *horror* intertwines with the concepts of conflict and suspense and helps us to understand different undesirable emotions, such as fear. Within the boundaries of game's rules and genre conventions is a safe space for the player for feeling these emotions. (Crawford, 1997; Perron, 2009.) Even though horror genre has increased its popularity both among scholars and commercially, the study of horror in video games is still scarce. That has led to the academia to exploit other media, namely literature and cinema, to explain the topic of horror. First horror video games origin from the 1980s. (Perron, 2009.) The first in line of *survival-horror* video games were *Alone in The Dark* (Infogrames, 1992), which “*redefined the way action and adventure could be used to create suspense*” (Fahs, 2008, para. 2). The game mixed several elements, such as action, use of the inventory and maze-like world (Fahs, 2008; Perron, 2009). Games such as in the *Resident Evil* series further exploited these conventions by using the techniques familiar from films, such as camera angles and sounds (Perron, 2009), in order to elicit suspense and fear. As survival-horror mixes various genres, defining the genre has proven to be a complex issue (ibid.). As mentioned earlier, a core mechanic defines the genre of a game (Salen & Zimmerman, 2004; Wolf, 2008). The element of interactivity in video games have further stretched the boundaries of the topic of survival-horror (Perron, 2009). As mentioned in chapter 2.4, the storytelling in video games functions best if the plot is simple (ibid.). It needs to be understood rather fast to support the whole gameplay experience, including motivating the player's for action and making meaningful choices (ibid.; Salen & Zimmerman, 2004). The genre of horror fits well to minimalist storytelling, as horror functions best the more is left for imagination for the audience and the less is explained or shown. Horror also intertwines closely with suspense, as the uncertainty of the audiences results that filling the gaps will be more disturbing than any author can ever invent. (Perron, 2009.) Horror games are often situated in a familiar world enabling player identification, but with an alteration to make it special: e.g. an evil force, which has changed the world somehow (Perron, 2009). At best, the change influences the gameplay mechanics, as well, enabling supernatural phenomenon to occur. However, the familiarity of the game world in horror games should keep the player better immersed, compared to e.g. fantasy. (Ibid.) Video games are restricted environments and limit the player action in multiple ways, which can degrade the gameplay experience (Salen & Zimmerman, 2004; Sheldon, 2004), e.g. by breaking the immersion (discussed more in chapter 4). As different games manifest different gameplay, there are also various ways

of how gameplay experience of survival-horror game is generated. Limiting the navigation and exploration of the player fits well in the events of horror games. Authorial control of the system is much more acceptable in the genre of horror, when restringing the leaving from a certain game area can be explained with a deadly mist, for example. Most importantly, games of horror exploit the technique of limiting information. (Perron, 2009.) For example, in *Silent Hill 2* (Konami Computer, 2001), the horror is elicited through game sounds. The omnipresent sounds, which function as a warning signs of approaching monsters that yet cannot be seen, or indicate the goals of the game, are at the core of the gameplay experience of the game. Generally, at the core of the gameplay experience of the survival-horror game is the ability to adjust to the events unfolding with a feeling of vulnerability. (Perron, 2009.)

4 MEANINGFUL GAMEPLAY EXPERIENCE

As indicated in the previous chapters, video games are vastly complex. For example, video games can be discussed as systems of many kinds (Crawford, 1997; Salen & Zimmerman, 2004; Nacke, 2014), the discussion can emphasise the storytelling aspects (Murray, 1997; Juul, 2005; Mukherjee, 2015) or video games can be discussed as texts (Murray, 1997; Aarseth, 1997; Montfort, 2001; Mukherjee, 2015). This complexity is underlined by the hybrid nature of video games: they require participatory action for constructing their structures (Salen & Zimmerman, 2004; Ermi & Mäyrä, 2005; Van Vught & Schott, 2012; Mukherjee, 2015). This complex relationship, where game, player, and gameplay are intertwined, calls the need to find ways to discuss video games in a more applicable manner (Consalvo and Dutton, 2006; Fernández-Vara, 2015; Mukherjee, 2015).

In this chapter the topic of gameplay in video games is discussed. However, because of the complexity of the topic, the discussion intersects with both the games and the player. At first, the intertwined nature of game, play, and meaning is discussed. Sub-chapter 4.2 discussed the versatile study of gameplay experience through by introducing concepts, such as interactivity, authorship, identification, immersion, and agency. The final sub-chapters deepen the issue of gameplay experience by introducing the theory of (w)reading, the SCI-model (Ermi & Mäyrä, 2005), and the concept of Zone of Becoming (Mukherjee, 2015). The discussing is used as a foundation for defining the meaningful gameplay experience in all its complexity, and are central for understanding the gameplay experience of cinematic, story-driven games, such as TWD:S1. In addition, (w)reading is both a concept and a data collecting method of the Walkthrough, which is more thoroughly discussed in chapters 6 and 7.

4.1 Gameplay and meaning

Games, play, and meaning are intertwined concepts (Huizinga, 1980; Salen & Zimmerman, 2004). Firstly, both play and meaning are fundamental aspects of humans. For example, Huizinga (1980, 1) has stated that “*Play is older than culture*”, it is an activity of various forms and all forms of play have some meaning (ibid.). In general, human life is full of moments in which we try make sense of the world by interpreting,

interacting with, and constructing meanings (Salen & Zimmerman, 2004). Secondly, games, as a form of play, create meanings in gameplay activity. The term *gameplay* can be briefly defined as a “*formalized interaction that occurs when players follow the rules of a game and experience its system through play.*” (Salen & Zimmerman, 2004, chapter 22, 3.) Occurring only in games, gameplay is an experience of creating various meanings, when players agree to follow the rules of the game and other elements, such as obstacles and goals in a gaming encounter (ibid.).

One of the first attempts to understand experiences occurring during play, was the study by Roger Caillois in 1962, where forms of play was introduced. The study of Richard Bartle (1996) gave further insight on pleasures of play by offering the typology of player types. Several studies from other angles of gameplay experience have been conducted also, for example, based on gender by Henry Jenkins in 1998, or the study of paratexts, such in the paper *Shoot Club: The DOOM 3 Review* by Tom Chick (2004), where the experience of play broaden to include the intertwined experiences of *DOOM 3* (id Software, 2004). David Sudnow’s (1983) case study, *Eyeball and Cathexis*, is an attempt to captivate the experience of play in the event of uncertain outcome (Salen & Zimmerman, 2006). Ermi and Mäyrä (2005) has extensively defined the experience of gameplay with their SCI-model, which is discussed more thoroughly in chapter 4.4. They have also discussed about the term gameplay, which refers to “*the essential but elusive quality that defines the character of a game as a game, the quality of its ‘gameness’.*” (Ermi & Mäyrä, 2005, 2). In addition, they argue that the “*experience is informed by multiple significant game elements, which can be very different in games from different genres, as well as by the abilities and preferences of the players.*” (Ermi & Mäyrä, 2005, 2).

Uncertainty and tension – in a close relation to suspense and drama – are experiences elicited from gameplay (Salen and Zimmerman, 2006). They all are highly researched topics, and the variety of research angles include, for example, the study of formal aspects of games, such as Richard Rouse III’s (2001) analysis, *Game Analysis: Centipede* (2001), or Marc LeBlanc’s essay *Tools for Creating Dramatic Game Dynamics* (2005), where game’s dynamics are studied. LeBlanc (2005) has discussed that the aesthetics of games are in game’s “*emotional content*” and they emerge from game’s dynamics (Salen & Zimmerman, 2006, 441). This links directly to the issue of game’s control to dictate the gameplay experience and other overlapping aspects, such as drama (ibid.). In addition, it

intertwines with the concept of authorship, when the system of a game is an author. LeBlanc's (2005) notion is not a unique one, and the topic of control and authorship has been studied from various angles. As discussed previously in this master's thesis both the authorship and control are far more complex issues than LeBlanc (2005) indicates. The system of the game and the player are important in formation of not only the gameplay experience, but also the emotional and dramatic content of the game (Murray, 1997; Sheldon, 2004; Salen & Zimmerman, 2006; Rabin, 2010; Mukherjee, 2015).

Meaningful play is directly linked to the decision making and the choices of the player (Salen & Zimmerman, 2004). Furthermore, the possible choices and the freedom the player has influence on the player agency (Mukherjee, 2015). Meaning making process begins from the decision to participate in play activity or not. As discussed in the context of anatomy of choice in chapter 2.2, the choice of the player results an action, which leads to an outcome (Salen & Zimmerman, 2004). The whole gameplay activity is "*making choices and taking actions*" (Salen & Zimmerman, 2004, chapter 3, 3). In other words, every action of the player leads to a change in the system, which in turn leads to the emerging of meanings during the gameplay (ibid.).

The Ludologists claimed that the story is merely a prosthesis in a video game (Mukherjee, 2015). The Narratologists stand was that video games should be placed "*as firmly as possible in the hands of the storytellers*" (Murray, 1997, 284). However, the real question should not be if there are stories in games, but instead how the stories of games are formulated. For example, Jane McGonigal ("Game Changer?" 2011, para. 15) has highlighted the "*gamer's experience*" by "*making something meaningful out of the experience*". This meaningful experience is formulated in the intersection of the game and the player, where the story occurs (ibid.). Mukherjee (2015) has also underlined the storytelling aspects of video games: the story and the game should be understood as each other's supplement's. Understanding the multiplicity associations and supplementary relationship of the machinic, ludic, and narrative aspects are crucial for understanding the gameplay experience in video games (ibid.).

In this master's thesis, games are discussed from various viewpoints, which intersects in different junctions in the complex system. One of these viewpoints is the overlapping of the game and the player with bilateral relationship of the gameplay and the story. When considering the supplementary and the machinic nature of this complex interaction, the

story and gameplay directly influence to each other. On the hand, the story changes because of the gameplay, and on the other, the gameplay needs to be modified to keep up with the story. Video games function in a system and involve different interconnected elements, e.g. “*the player (game element), the story engine (story element) and the game engine (technology element)*”, which form the complex and meaningful gameplay experience (Mukherjee, 2015, 13). Basically, the video game story is affected by the gameplay, which in turn is constantly altered to keep up pace with the story. Furthermore, all elements are central, and all elements are supplements to each other in formulating the gameplay experience.

Two kinds of meaningful play can be differentiated, although they are closely related. The first definition is called *descriptive*: all games create meaningful play of some sort from the interconnected and essential nature of the action of the player and the outcome of the system. However, some games are more meaningful compared to others. The second definition is called *evaluative* and is about the psychological and emotional gameplay experience. (Salen & Zimmerman, 2004.) Evaluative meaningful gameplay experience is emerged when the interconnections of player’s action and outcome of the system are integrated and discernible “*into the larger context of the game*” (Salen & Zimmerman, 2004, Chapter 3, 4) To better understand why this type of gameplay is more meaningful, the terms discernible and integrated are introduced next.

Discernible means that the system provides immediate and clear feedback for the player after an action. If the relationship between an action and the outcome is not discernible, meaningful play is challenging to accomplish (Salen & Zimmerman, 2004). *Integrated* means that the outcome of each action of the player “*is woven into the larger fabric*” of both the game system and the gameplay as a whole making the experience “*truly meaningful*” (Salen & Zimmerman, 2004, Chapter 3, 6). With the notions of ‘woven’ and ‘fabric’ useful entry points between meaningful gameplay experience and the concept of text can be found. As discussed in chapter 2.5, the nature of text as “*tissue of a literary work, that which is woven or a web*” (Mukherjee, 2015, 30), makes text a machinic entity, which attaches to the reader. Briefly, meaningful gameplay experience, i.e. ‘fabric’, or text as a ‘tissue’ are ‘woven’ in creating of a meaningful gameplay experience.

4.2 Towards defining meaningful gameplay experience

Playing a video game differs from watching a film (Aarseth, 1997; Salen & Zimmerman, 2004; Juul, 2005; Van Vught, 2012; Mukherjee, 2015). Games are made of various elements, which enable player interaction and the activity of gameplay is fundamentally interactive (Salen & Zimmerman, 2004; Juul, 2005; Ermi & Mäyrä, 2005; Nacke, 2014; Mukherjee, 2015). Conflict, for example, is a fundamental element in games. The only way to avoid conflict is to eliminate interaction (Crawford, 1997). Without interaction, there is no conflict, thus resulting in that both are needed for a gameplay to occur.

Aarseth (1997) has discussed about the nontrivial nature of this activity: similar as the viewers are watching a film, the player scans the screen. However, the players are in control of the action on the screen (ibid.). In addition, this activity can be labelled as *configurative*, which are the physical and mental inputs of the player (Van Vught & Schott, 2012). The physical input is e.g. pushing the buttons of the gamepad, and the mental input is planning and choosing (ibid.), similarly as previously discussed in chapter 2.2 in the context of anatomy of choice (Salen & Zimmerman, 2004). The experiences of pleasure and other emotions, such as suspense, are build up from multiple interconnected parts, which are linked to meaningful gameplay. These occur in both macro and micro level, e.g. in interactions with core mechanics, in short-term goals and all the way to achieving the objective(s) of long-term goals. (Ibid.) In addition, the activity of gameplay is about personal success and failure, and where the events of the screen need to be determined by the player, whereas films are “*representations of activities*” which involve others, and where the viewer constructs her own fiction from the “*set of signs*” (Van Vught & Schott, 2012, 95).

From the game design point of view, interactivity intertwines with the concepts of system, design, and meaningful gameplay. The result of the player interaction with the designed game is the emergent of meaningful play in the space of possibility (Salen & Zimmerman, 2004; Mukherjee, 2015). Interactivity can be categorised into four overlapping modes, which can be used for understanding different moments of interactivity, and often occurring at the same time. The first mode of interactivity is cognitive, including participation, which is interpretive. The second mode is functional, i.e. participation in utilitarian means. The third mode of interactivity is explicit, i.e. participation with procedures and choices, that are designed. The fourth mode is “*beyond-the-object-*

interactivity”, which is participation through culture (Salen & Zimmerman, 2004, chapter 6, 13.) In addition, a core mechanic is included in every game, and thus it is an essential interaction of a game (ibid.). This key gameplay activity defines a game for not only being a game, but also the genre of the game (ibid.; Wolf, 2008).

Video games are interactive (Salen & Zimmerman, 2004; Juul, 2005; Van Vught & Schott, 2012; Nacke, 2014). This fundamental nature of games makes the formation of the story in games problematic, underlined by the feud between the Narratologists and the Ludologists (Juul, 2005; Mukherjee, 2015), discussed in chapter 2.1. In the classical sense, the story is written by the author. In conventional novels the text progresses from the beginning to the end in a predefined path designed by the author. Normally the reader of the text reads the novel the way the author intended: word by word and pages in a chronological order, to keep up with the story. The problems have occurred when the story in video games has been tried to be explained in the classical sense (Mukherjee, 2015). Generally, the structure of the storyline can be predefined in video games. The story of the game can be authored, i.e. designed, with the story elements (see chapter 2.4). For example, *TWD:SI* has a branching storyline. However, for the gameplay to progress the player input is needed (Salen & Zimmerman, 2004), and ultimately it is the player who is needed for the story to exist (Mukherjee, 2015). Moreover, it is the player who takes part in the formation of the story (ibid.). This duality has raised the question of who is the author of the story in video games? Is it the game designer or the player?

To better understand the authorship in games, a concept of control should be discussed. As introduced in chapter 2, all games include rules, and their formal characteristics link them directly to the concept of authorship and control. For example, rules are binding: they represent the authority of the game. In addition, “*rules limit player action*” (Salen & Zimmerman, 2004, chapter 11, 3) and are sets of instructions, which are meant to be followed for the game to progress. Thus, the rules also have a direct influence on the control of the game (ibid.), and the designer, i.e. the author, has “*within their control to determine the dramatic quality of the game experiences they produce.*” (Salen and Zimmerman 2006, 4). The notion of control emphasizes the game’s authorship. Furthermore, the authorial control of the game is an important factor influencing the player experience, and thus, the experience of suspense.

From the story point of view, the concept of authorship has been discussed in chapter 2.4. Janet Murray (1997, 284) has discussed the authorship between the game, and the player, and claiming that video games should be placed “*as firmly as possible in the hands of the storytellers*”. Aarseth’s (1997) approach was the opposite, when he presented the term ergodic, which highlighted the player, or readers, actively experiencing the text. Murray (1997, 123) also argued about *agency*, a topic more thoroughly discussed later in this chapter, which “*is the satisfying power to take meaningful action and see the results of our decisions and choices*”. The notion of power relates to concepts of authorship and control of the player, and “*our decisions and choices*” (Murray, 1997, 123) link to the concept of anatomy of choice (Salen & Zimmerman, 2004) as discussed in chapter 2.2. Conversely, limiting or removing agency results in a powerless feeling, as the player has neither authorship nor control (ibid.).

The discussion of different genres in chapters 3.3 and 3.4 highlighted the different aspects of authorship, as well. For example, in the horror genre different techniques of limiting information, navigation, and exploration are central elements of the authorial control of the system. These are not only effective ways of eliciting emotions, such as suspense, but also accepted by the player. (Perron, 2009.) Even though this is an accepted convention in horror games, limiting too much information in different types of games might result in the game become unplayable (Salen & Zimmerman, 2004).

As it can be deduced, interactivity and authorship are useful concepts for understanding the intertwined nature of the game, the player, and the gameplay. However, they are inadequate alone to fully understand the issue. Next, the concept of identification is discussed, which was briefly mentioned in chapter 3.3 in the context of horror game genre, in which the familiarity of the game world can enable player identification (Perron, 2009). The concept has been discussed by many disciplines, e.g. film studies, ethnography and psychology, and most recently, by game studies (Taylor, Kampe and Bell, 2015). *Identification* can be defined as “*form of projective affiliation between player and digitally-mediated character*” (Taylor et al., 2015, para. 2). This relationship of the player and the game character can be examined as indeterminant and flux, rather than as fixed (ibid.).

Some scholars have discussed the voyeuristic nature of avatars, i.e. game characters. They are reflections of the player where to invest different emotions, similar to protagonists of

films (Taylor et al., 2015). Other scholars have discussed the possibility of avatars being as virtual embodiments of the players, which enable “*to act out different roles, orientations and outlooks*” (Taylor et al., 2015, para. 11). Avatars are vessels, which can be used in many ways in virtual environments (ibid.). However, this is dependable on the interactions of the game, and the “*perception of agency*” of avatars can change during the gameplay (Taylor et al., 2015, para. 12). These shifts in identification, i.e. altered affiliations, are manifold. Different games have different objects to identify with varying from avatars of the most abstract to realistic characters, or even situations. As the identification is dependable on the game’s output, this in turn influence on the gameplay experience and e.g. player’s decision making. The capacity and the background of the player also have influence on identification, thus intertwining with the concepts of assemblage and schemas, for example. All these shifting factors results to different experiences, which are not dependable solely on the game’s diegetic elements, and the player-avatar-relationship can shift between events. The identification can emerge from four different settings in video games blurring the boundaries of formal, experiential, and cultural systems, which were introduced in chapter 2.3. Firstly, *simulated* emerges from the game world. Secondly, *lived* emerges from the orientations and the real-world experiences of the player. Thirdly, *conventional* emerges from the player’s prior associations with related media. Lastly, *situated* emerges from the gameplay setting (ibid.).

In a nutshell, identification can be considered as dynamic and continual (Taylor et al., 2015). It occurs during the subjective gameplay experience and is formed in a combination of the gaming situation, the context of the gameplay, the player, and the player’s background, including e.g. assemblages and schemas (Ermi & Mäyrä, 2005; Mukherjee, 2015; Taylor et al., 2015). Identification is discussed later in this master’s thesis more thoroughly, both in the context of SCI-model in chapter 4.4, and in the relation of Zone of Becoming in chapter 4.5.

Next, the topic of immersion is introduced, which is a fundamental concept of the gameplay experience (Ermi & Mäyrä, 2005). It is a broadly discussed, although vague and complex topic in game studies (McMahon, 2003; Ermi & Mäyrä, 2005; Bonello, 2015), and thus problematic to define precisely. This complexity is underlined by the dualistic nature of both a deep involvement when the player is immersed in the game world, and a disruptive force, when a simplest thing can break the immersion (Bonello,

2015). The discussion is best to begin with the concept of presence, which is closely related to the concept of immersion (McMahon, 2003; Ermi & Mäyrä, 2005). *Presence* is used in media studies in attempts to evaluate psychological experience of being part of a world of an artificial system (Ermi & Mäyrä, 2005). Because both terms, immersion and presence, are interchangeable, they have often been mixed (McMahon, 2003). McMahon (2003, 68) has defined *immersion* as a situation where “*the player is caught up in the world of the game’s story (the diegetic level), but it also refers to the player’s love of the game and the strategy that goes into it (the nondiegetic level)*”, where the two levels might be conflicting with each other. By discussing both the “*game’s story*” and “*game and the strategy*”, McMahon’s (2003, 68) definition leans towards the synthesis of video games, where both the game’s elements of story and formal, and different environments are intertwined.

Previously, Murray (1997, 98) had argued, that the experience of immersion is psychological: “*the sensation of being surrounded by a completely other reality*”, which “*takes over all of our attention*”. Even though audio and visual representations influence on the experience of immersion in games, they are not the most important factors. Instead, the sense of immersion is best achieved when three of the following conditions are achieved. (Ermi & Mäyrä, 2005.) Firstly, the game should have meaning for the player (McMahon, 2003). Meaningful play can be defined as both integrated and discernable. Discernable means that the system provides immediate and clear feedback for the player after an action. If the relationship between an action and the outcome is not discernable, meaningful play is challenging to accomplish. (Salen & Zimmerman, 2004.) When “*the outcome of an action is woven into the game system as a whole*”, the meaning is integrated (Salen & Zimmerman, 2004, Chapter 3, 6). Secondly, the game should match the player’s expectations (McMahon, 2003). Schemas (see chapter 3.1) are a strong part of building immersion. For example, different conventions of genres induce different expectations and hypotheses for the players (Douglas & Hargadon, 2000; Ermi & Mäyrä, 2005). Thirdly, the game world should be consistent (McMahon, 2003). Different aspects of playability, such as audiovisual, structural, and functional, are required for immersive gameplay experiences (Ermi & Mäyrä, 2005).

Interactivity, identification, and immersion are intertwined concepts (Bonello, 2015). As discussed previously in this chapter, avatars can be considered as reflections of the player. Players of the game can invest different emotions to avatars, similar than protagonists of

films. In addition, avatars can function as virtual embodiments of the players, and they enable players to act in different ways (Taylor et al., 2015). Intruding of meta-medial awareness and self-reflexivity might interfere the aspects that are associated with the concept of immersion, such as transparency and immediacy (Bonello, 2015). However, this interactivity is not only a disruptive force that diminish immersion, but also can increase immersion (ibid.), e.g. in the case of horror games (Perron, 2009).

Before moving into the next chapter, where the meaningful gameplay experience is discussed more thoroughly, a topic of agency needs to be discussed. It is a useful topic for understanding the player's role in video games, and has been both researched and debated (Murray, 1997; Salen & Zimmerman, 2004; Mukherjee, 2015). For example, scholars have studied whether there is a free choice of the player in games or if there is merely an illusion of control, i.e. illusion of agency (Sheldon, 2004; Mukherjee, 2015). However, a commonly agreed notion amongst game scholars is that agency intersects with the system, the player, and the designer (Mukherjee, 2015).

Janet Murray has argued that *“agency is the satisfying power to take meaningful action and see the results of our decisions and choices”* (Murray, 1997, 123). In this context, the notion of power is discussed from the player's point of view. Power intertwines with the concepts of authorship and control, as it was previously discussed in this chapter and in chapter 2. In addition, the notion of *“our decisions and choices”* (Murray, 1997, 123) can be understood to relate to the concept of anatomy of choice (Salen & Zimmerman, 2004, chapter 6, 8), which was introduced in chapter 2.2. Moreover, Murray (1997, 123) writes about *“meaningful action”*, thus highlighting action, and implying that action needs to have at least some relevance for the player to feel agency. However, Murray (1997) sees agency as embedded, which is problematic (Mukherjee, 2015). Instead, *“the action in video games occurs in a process of interaction between player and machine”* (Mukherjee, 2015, 152), which have been previously discussed in chapter 2 and 3 and is discussed in more detail in chapters 4.3 and 4.5.

The term action is crucial in explaining agency. For example, Alexander Galloway (2006, 2) has stated action as the *“word one for video game theory”* with his analogy: *“If photographs are images, and films are moving images, then video games are actions”* (Galloway, 2006, 2). In addition, Salen and Zimmerman (2004, chapter 6, 1) has emphasised action by stating that games are interactive environments where *“the player*

has agency to initiate and perform a whole range of explicit actions.” In the very moment of these actions “*the tone and texture of a specific game experience*” is defined (Salen & Zimmerman, 2004, chapter 6, 1). Conversely, if the system limits the agency, i.e. limits player action, or removes it altogether, this results that the player feels powerless (ibid.), as the player has neither authorship nor control on the events of the game. However, there is an exception. Meaningful play can emerge by limiting agency, e.g. as discussed in chapter 3.4 in the context of horror games (Perron, 2009). After all, meaningful play and uncertainty, have an intrinsic connection. (Salen & Zimmerman, 2004).

4.3 (W)reading

In this master’s thesis, various Deleuzoquattarian concepts have been discussed, such as assemblages and schemas in chapter 3. In addition, the notion of games as texts have been addressed in chapter 2.5, and the discussion have included, e.g. the machinic nature of text, and the topics of hypertext and cypertext. Understanding the mentioned concepts and topics are crucial for understanding the process of (w)reading, as well. While this chapter describes the process of (w)reading, a better understanding of (w)reading is acquired in chapter 4.5, where the concept of Zone of Becoming is introduced. Furthermore, chapter 7 defines both (w)reading and Zone of Becoming in the context of the study conducted in this master’s thesis.

(W)reading should not be confused with the neologism wreading. The concept of (w)reading is used here to emphasise “*the supplementarity the processes of reading and writing*” (Mukherjee, 2015, 19), that is characterised by all forms of narrative media. Furthermore, the differentiation of the two words is important, as the neologism wreading have a connotation that the processes of reading and writing are the same thing. In video games, (w)reading is simultaneously both the passive and active gameplay experience and can be used to explain video games as a medium of narration, as well. However, the user, i.e. the reader/player, needs to understand the machinic text structure before the process of (w)reading is possible. (Ibid.)

In video games, the system responds to the player’s input. In the context of (w)reading: the machine responds to the user’s reading, and the system reads the player. Every machine constitutes a text that can be read, and the same applies to video games. The text which is formed by the video game can be read by the player. Furthermore, the system of

a video game ‘reads’ the player by system output according to the player’s action. This applies especially in the story level, which is formed jointly of both the machine, i.e. the video game, and the user, i.e. the player. (Mukherjee, 2015.)

Two issues need consideration in the act of reading. Firstly, it overlaps with the act of writing and the whole process of the act of reading and writing work in a loop of feedback in the formation of the story. Secondly, in video games the whole process is dependent on the act of playing. (Mukherjee, 2015.) In a nutshell, this supplementary and intertwined relationship between the game, the machine, and the story can be understood as a gameplay experience, that is “*the experience of the machinic text*”, which is “*constituted by a complex of reading, writing and play taken together.*” (Mukherjee, 2015, 49)

4.4 SCI-model

Experiences of humans in games consists of similar elements as the experiences in other environments. Ermi and Mäyrä (2005, 2) have defined gameplay experience “*as an ensemble made up of the player’s sensations, thoughts, feelings, actions, and meaning-making in a gameplay setting*”. This definition relates closely with the concept of assemblage (see chapter 3.2). Assemblage was defined as a collection of persons, components, parts, things, or aspects (Deleuze & Guattari, 2004; McGregor-Wise, 2005; Phillips, 2006; Mukherjee, 2015; DeLanda, 2016; Assemblage 2018). The concept of ensemble is a subtle step towards the context of games, as the defining word is elements, which link the experience in virtual environments to all other experiences of humans (Ermi & Mäyrä, 2005). This means that, for example, the concepts of assemblages and schemas as well as different game elements can be understood with the SCI-model. The definition of ensemble is an important addition not only to the concept of assemblage, but also on defining the complexity of gameplay experience by highlight the aspects of “sensations, thoughts, feelings, actions, and meaning-making”, and the intertwined relationship of the player and the game (Ermi & Mäyrä, 2005, 2). Ermi and Mäyrä (2005, 2) has further defined that gameplay experience “*it is not a property or a direct cause of certain elements of a game but something that emerges in a unique interaction process between the game and the player*”, and thus share the notion of the uniqueness of video games, and that games should be considered as artefacts rather than any medium (Hunicke, LeBlanc and Zubek, 2004). Furthermore, the definition of gameplay

experience is underlined by the hybrid nature of video games: they require participatory action for constructing their structures, and the game, the player, and the gameplay are intertwined (Salen & Zimmerman, 2004; Mäyrä & Ermi, 2005; Van Vught & Schott, 2012; Mukherjee, 2015).

The concept of immersion has been discussed previously in chapter 4.2, and it is largely used concept when discussing experiences of gameplay (Ermi & Mäyrä, 2005). However, for better understand the intertwined nature of gameplay and immersion in the context of SCI-model, a few things need to be addressed. Here, immersion refers to “*becoming physically or virtually a part of the experience itself*” (Ermi & Mäyrä, 2005, 4), thus overlapping with the concept named Zone of Becoming, which is discussed in the next chapter. In addition, the experiences of gameplay are escapist experiences, where immersion is central, along with the active participation of the player. Both audio and visual representations influence in the experience of immersion in games, but they are not the most important factors. Instead, the sense of immersion is best achieved when three following conditions are achieved. (Ibid.) Firstly, the game should have meaning for the player (McMahan, 2003, 69). As discussed before, meaningful play can be defined both integrated and discernable (Salen & Zimmerman, 2003). Secondly, the game should match the player expectations (McMahan, 2003, 69). Schemas are strongly a part of building immersion, as different genres induce different expectations and hypotheses for the players (Ermi & Mäyrä, 2005; Douglas & Hargadon, 2000). Thirdly, the game world should be consistent (McMahan, 2003, 69). Different aspects of playability, such as audiovisual, structural, and functional, are required for immersive gameplay experiences (Ermi & Mäyrä, 2005).

The complexity of meaningful gameplay experience can be inspected with the model of gameplay experience called SCI-model, which is formulated from three components: sensory (S), challenge-based (C), and imaginative immersion (I). The SCI-model focuses on immersion (Ermi & Mäyrä, 2005). Even though being a problematic issue as pointed out in the previous chapter, the SCI-model and the theories and concepts related to it are useful for analysing gameplay experience of games such as *TWD:SI*. This is mainly because the inclusiveness of the term immersion when formulating the SCI-model and it can be used as a foundation for the analysis of the gameplay experience of *TWD:SI*.

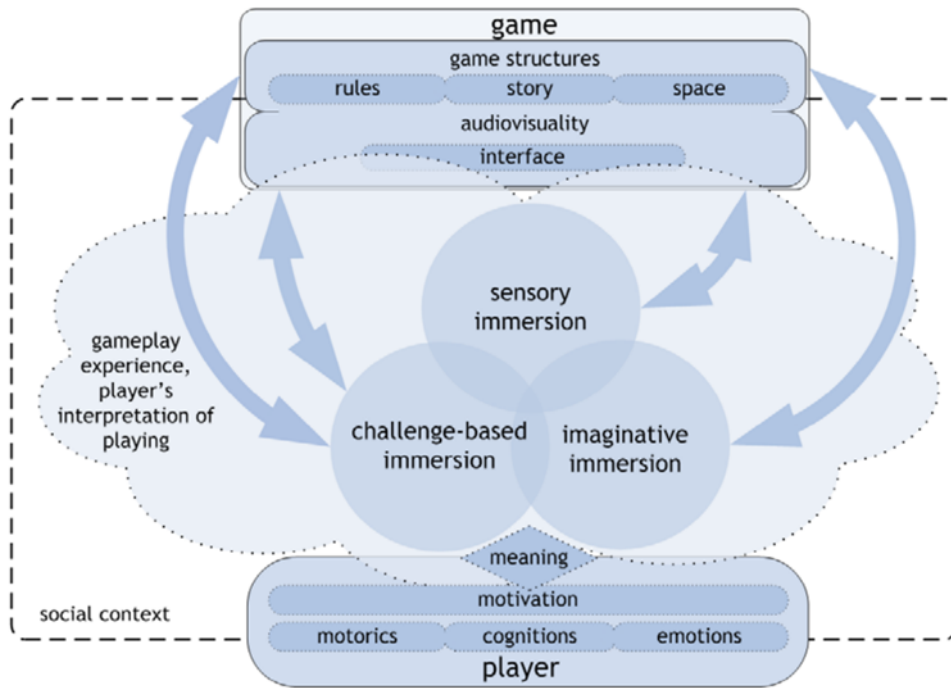


Figure 1: SCI-model explains the complexity of the gameplay experience by identifying the three types of immersion that intertwine with various other key elements (Ermi & Mäyrä, 2005).

For better understand the SCI-model, the three-letter prefix needs to be discussed. Firstly, sensory immersion (S) is *“the audiovisual execution of games”* (Ermi & Mäyrä, 2005, 7). Development of both hardware and software have enabled complex and impressive virtual worlds, and the audiovisuality of these systems can captivate the player’s attention immersively (ibid.). Secondly, challenge-based immersion (C) refers to a feeling *“that is at its most powerful when one is able to achieve a satisfying balance of challenges and abilities”* (Ermi & Mäyrä, 2005, 8). Thirdly, imaginative immersion (I) *“offers the player a chance to use her imagination, empathise with the characters, or just enjoy the fantasy of the game”*, when the player *“becomes absorbed with the stories and the world, or begins to feel for or identify with a game character”* (Ermi & Mäyrä, 2005, 8). This type of immersion emphasises the central role of different elements of the system, such as characters, worlds, and story elements (ibid.).

After publishing the SCI-model, Mäyrä has stated that he has *further “developed a more comprehensive view how games can be approached within a wider setting of cultural, societal and intellectual contexts”* by presenting *“the dual structure model”* of digital games (Ermi & Mäyrä, 2011, 89). The two sides of this duality are the surface of the game and the core gameplay, which intertwine with the various elements of games. Gameplay experiences differ based on these elements and their intertwined relationship with games

and players. He points out that “*games are what we make out of them – what we do with them, what we think about them, speak about them, and even the ways in which we approach them in scholarly practice have an effect of how the meaning and experience of games becomes constructed.*” (Ermi & Mäyrä, 2011, 90)

Ermi and Mäyrä (2005, 7) suggest that the SCI-model introduced does *not* “*constitute a comprehensive analysis, but rather designed to guide attention to the complex dynamics that are involved in the interaction between a player and a game.*” Thus, SCI-model is used as a foundation for discussing the complex issue of gameplay experience and all the interrelated aspects, which are fundamental for analysing games, such as *TWD:SI*. These things are addressed more thoroughly in chapter 7, where the guideline for the qualitative textual analysis is presented.

4.5 Zone of Becoming

Sharing similarities to the concept of space of possibilities (Salen & Zimmerman, 2004), which were previously discussed in chapter 2.2, 2.3 and 4.1, the gameplay occurs in the *Zone of Becoming*: “*where, in each decision, one event out of many possibilities is actualised*” (Mukherjee, 2015, 20). Build on the foundation of the Deleuzoquattarian concepts of assemblage, schema and machinic, Zone of Becoming can be understood as “*deep involvement*” which the machinic (w)reading process of video games create (Mukherjee, 2015, 20). Thus, Zone of Becoming both relates closely to immersion, and shares similarities with the SCI-model. The inclusion of various other concepts and theories, that are discussed next, results that Zone of Becoming is a complex issue and needs to be introduced thoroughly.

The foundation for understanding Zone of Becoming is in the notion that video games are fundamentally actions (Aarseth, 1997; Murray, 1997; Salen & Zimmerman, 2004; Ermi & Mäyrä, 2005; Galloway, 2006; Mukherjee, 2015), and their characteristics are underlined by complexity and multiplicity (Juul, 2005; Mukherjee, 2015). Action has been previously discussed in this master’s thesis in the relation of various concepts, such as interactivity, agency, and immersion. Understanding action is crucial for understanding other interrelated aspects of games, such as authorship, freedom, control, and meaningful gameplay (Salen & Zimmerman, 2004; Perron, 2009; Mukherjee, 2015). Although being valid theories, they are nevertheless alone incomplete for understanding the complexity

of gameplay experience. Thus, a more holistic view of the gameplay experience as a process is needed, instead of understanding merely singular concepts. A better way of understanding action, multiplicity and complexity of the gameplay experience as a process is to apply Deleuzoquattarian concepts in video games (Mukherjee, 2015), which have been already discussed in chapter 3, where concepts such as assemblages, multiplicity, and machinic were discussed.

When applying the Deleuzoquattarian approach in video games, the nature of action can be understood in ways other than player's merely acting on games. On the contrary, because of the its machinic nature, the machine acts on the players, and can be understood with the concept of (w)reading (see chapter 4.3). Furthermore, the nature of action is a multiplicity meaning that actions are both repetitive, yet different, rather than a unified single event. Becoming can be understood as involvement during the (w)reading process, that is underlined by an alternating of identities and actualizations. (Mukherjee, 2015.) This notion closely relates to the theory of altered affiliations, presented in chapter 4.1. A dynamic and continual identification occurs during the subjective gameplay experience and is formed in a combination of the gaming situation, the context of the gameplay, the player and the player's background, including e.g. assemblages and schemas (Taylor et al., 2015; Mukherjee, 2015).

As discussed previously in this master's thesis, any text is machinic. In addition, text's characteristic is multiplicity and text link with the process of play in a process of (w)reading (Mukherjee, 2015). Furthermore, gameplay experience can be understood as an ensemble which link the experience in virtual environments to all other human experiences (Ermi & Mäyrä, 2005). Similarly, the relationship of the elements in an assemblage are machinic (Mukherjee, 2015). However, video games do not exist in a vacuum (Salen & Zimmerman, 2004; Apperley, 2006). Therefore, the multiplicity of video games is not in the games themselves. Video games are simultaneously connected to various assemblages, such as cultural, social, political, and economic and understanding the complexity of video games as complex, meaningful systems where game, player, and gameplay intertwine, is to inspect them as a multiplicity of assemblages. During the process of gameplay, the relationship of the player and the machine is simultaneously an activity of a singular and a multiplicity. Furthermore, because of the intertwined nature of the machine, both the formal aspects of the game, and the story is emerged in the Zone of Becoming. (Mukherjee, 2015.)

5 SUSPENSE IN VIDEO GAMES

Suspense is a highly researched topic, that origins from the Ancient Greece. Aristotle's writings in *Poetics* established not only concepts such as genres, narrative, and structure, but also introduced the neighboring terms of suspense, such as tragedy and catharsis (Whalley, 1997; Sheldon, 2004). Aristotle laid a foundation for suspense (Hiltunen, 2002), on which the later generations and various disciplines to build on, thus resulting diverse views on suspense. In fact, these theories have been under scrutiny from around 14th century (Suspense 2018), and to this day a consensus of suspense have yet to be made. Nevertheless, the theories of Aristotle's *Poetics* have stood the time surprisingly well, even though written over two millenniums ago, and can be used as a foundation for studying modern topics, as well.

Disciplines from different theoretical traditions, such as biological, cognitive psychology, communication and media and, most recently, game studies, have all tried to explain suspense in a way that best suits their purposes. The research done have been both interdisciplinary and monodisciplinary, which echoes the inclusiveness and exclusiveness of theories used when trying to understand suspense from the viewpoint of a specific discipline. Cognitive psychology, for example, has tried to explain suspense by examining literary texts (Oatley, 1995; Dijkstra et al., 1995; Kneepkens and Zwaan, 1995), whereas humanistic discipline of communication and media has concentrated on films (de Wied, 1995; de Wied, Zillmann and Ordman, 1995; Zillmann, 1995). Game studies, as a relatively new discipline, has taken probably the most interdisciplinary stance on explaining suspense by combining theories from all the other disciplines, while keeping in mind the characteristics of games (Frome & Smuts, 2004; Järvinen, 2008; Van Vught & Schott, 2012).

The next chapters will try to answer the question: *What is suspense in video games?* In chapter 5.1, the etymology of suspense is discussed, which underlines the ambiguous nature of the topic. Because the topic is open for multiple interpretations, the research angle for studying suspense is set in chapter 5.2. Keeping in mind both the multidisciplinary nature of game studies (Mäyrä, 2009; Fernández-Vara, 2015; Mukherjee, 2015; Lankoski & Björk, 2015) and the intertwined characteristics of video games (Salen & Zimmerman, 2004; Mäyrä, 2009; Mukherjee, 2015), the discussion of

chapter 5.3 aims to find ways to understand suspense in the context of games and presents four different types in which categorize suspense. Finally, in chapter 5.4, a new definition of suspense is introduced, which is applicable specifically in cinematic, story-driven games, such as *TWD:SI*. Both the four types of suspense and the new definition of suspense are used in the qualitative textual analysis conducted later in this master's thesis.

5.1 Etymology of suspense

Suspense as a topic of research is a diverse one, and so is the etymology of suspense. The term *suspense*, meaning “*abeyance, temporary cessation; state of not being carried out*” (Online Etymology Dictionary, 2016) or “*not being executed, unfulfilled*” (Dictionary.com, 2016) origins around the turn of the 14th century late Middle English (Dictionary.com, 2016; Online Etymology Dictionary, 2016; Suspense 2016; Oxford dictionaries, 2017; Merriam-Webster, 2018b). The word has its roots in the Anglo-French word *suspens*, meaning “*in abeyance*” from c. 1300 (Dictionary.com, 2016; Online Etymology Dictionary, 2016), and from Old French word *sospense*, meaning: “*delay, deferment (of judgement), act of suspending*” (Online Etymology Dictionary, 2016). It was derived from the Latin word of *suspensus*, which translates as suspended, hovering or doubtful (Online Etymology Dictionary, 2016; Oxford dictionaries, 2017), which in turn was derived from the word of *suspendere*, meaning “*to hang up; interrupt.*” (Online Etymology Dictionary, 2016). Derived from the legal meaning of “*not rendered, not paid, not carried out*” (Dictionary.com, 2016), or “*awaiting an expected decision*” (Online Etymology Dictionary, 2016), or “*state of having the mind or thoughts suspended*” (Online Etymology Dictionary, 2016), a more contemporary understanding of the word *suspense* is to be found from the mid-15th century, meaning “*state of mental uncertainty with more or less anxiety*” (Online Etymology Dictionary, 2016).

Various poets from 18th, and 19th centuries, such as Robert Burns, Alexander Pope, and Oscar Wilde, have had their saying of the word suspense, thus, entwining the word to literature, as well. For example, a quote from Alexander Pope's famous poem *Eloisa to Abelard*, which echoes in contemporary studies of suspense as well, stands as:

“For thee the fates, severely kind, ordain

A cool suspense from pleasure or from pain.” (Pope, 2019, para. 16)

From the beginning of the 1950s, *suspense* has been also used as a genre of stories and novels at first (Dictionary.com, 2016; Online Etymology Dictionary, 2016), then expanding to cover genres from other media, such as films and radio, and nowadays to label video games, as well.

5.2 Research angle

As pointed out previously, different media, e.g. literature, music, films, and most recently video games, have had their own ways on defining the term suspense. Even though some of the well-known theories and definitions from other media are introduced next, the emphasis of this study is on how researchers of video games define and explain suspense. Reasons for this type of approach is twofold: firstly, to limit the massive research material for best suited in the context of video games to get as precise definition as possible of suspense in video games. Secondly, as other media has managed to answer the multisided questions of how and why suspense is elicited, game studies are still asking those crucial questions. Thus, the qualitative textual analysis conducted in this master's thesis is important, because the study presented here tackles those questions. However, this does not mean that other theories are neglected. On the contrary, game studies is a multidisciplinary field, and theories of other disciplines are bound to be included. With the approach of this study, the most relevant and applicable theories and concepts are included, particularly considering the characteristics of *TWD:SI*, and video games with similar characteristics.

As suspense is such a broad and complex topic, there are certain aspects to be taken into consideration. Most importantly, in a general level, suspense should be considered as an umbrella term meaning that everything related to the term suspense are presented under it. Thus, the term suspense includes terms such as tension, which is used, both mixed, and parallel, with the term suspense. Suspense also includes concepts, such as *suspend disbelief*, meaning roughly audience's acceptance of believing something they know is fictional (Vorderer, Klimmt, Ritterfeld, 2004; Oxford dictionaries 2019c), and *paradox of suspense*, meaning in brief that even if the audience know exactly what is going to happen in the story, the suspense remains (Paradox of Suspense 2019). Several authors, such as Gerrig (1989), Yanal (1996), and Brewer (1996), have had their arguments about the paradox of suspense, which in turn underlines the complexity of the topic. Closely

relating to suspend disbelief is also notion of audiences willingly to tolerate unpleasant feelings of e.g. fear and anxiety, for example, when watching a horror movie or playing a stressful game (Perron, 2009). Selective-Exposure has been theorised (Bryant and Davies, 2006), and Järvinen (2008) argues that similar acceptance of tolerance occurs in players of games, as well. Lastly, scientists are still arguing about what is the correct number of basic emotions and where the roots of suspense are planted. The theories of basic emotions vary from just two dominant ones to as much as eleven different basic emotions (Ortony and Turner, 1990; Personalityresearch.com, 2001). However, the consensus among scholars is that suspense is an emotion, and not a mood, for example (Ortony et al., 1990; Järvinen, 2008; Van Vught & Schott, 2012).

5.3 Towards defining suspense in video games

Suspense is a subjective emotional player experience, and an essential element of all type of games (Järvinen, 2008; Van Vught & Schott, 2012). While the development of software and hardware have enabled more sophisticated and realistic video games, and therefore have found new ways for eliciting different experiences for the players, the experiences the players have had while playing games are physiologically the same compared to real-life. Elevated heart-beat, palms sweating and narrowed attentional focus are all the ways for a human body to react in suspenseful situations. The cause for players to react in such a profound way while playing video games is fascinating and has been a major interest of research among the humanistic and psychological scholars for a quarter century (Reich and Vorderer, 2015).

Research previously done is based on two opposing theoretical traditions. The first one, the humanistic tradition, borrows conventions mainly from films. It defines uncertainty, briefly the viewer's lack of knowing how things will occur in the future, as the core element of suspense. The second tradition, the psychological, concentrates on the individual. Psychological tradition has conducted e.g. the theory of affective-disposition. It aims to explain the viewer's forming a disposition – whether positive or negative – towards the characters in a narrative, and the preferable outcome the viewer has. These dispositions are key elements for creating suspense. If the viewer has e.g. a positive disposition, i.e. liking of towards a character in a movie the viewer is watching, then the viewer prefers a positive outcome to that character (Reich and Vorderer, 2015). This goes

also the other way around, as the viewer might hope for an antagonist to fail, or even die, during watching a movie. From this, it can be deduced, that the theory of affective-disposition can be applied in video games too, especially games that share similar conventions as films, such as cinematic, story-driven video games. However, the special characteristics of games need to be considered before jumping into this conclusion.

Following the humanistic and the psychological traditions, the game studies has continued to define suspense in video games. As fear and hope and uncertainty are well-recognized elements of suspense among the game scholars (Järvinen, 2008; Van Vught & Schott, 2012), those notions are used as a foundation of building the new definition of subjective and emotional experience of suspense in video games.

The multidisciplinary definition is best to begin with the notions of one of the most cited authors of the topic of suspense. Andrew Ortony (et al., 1990), from the field of cognitive psychology, has defined *suspense* roughly as something that is composed of fear, hope and the "*cognitive state of uncertainty*" (Frome & Smuts, 2004; Järvinen, 2008; Van Vught & Schott, 2012), a statement originally presented in the book *The Cognitive Structure of Emotions* (Ortony et al., 1990). Ortony et al. (1990) has also formulated the cognitive structure of emotions known as the OCC-model, which is used e.g. in the work of Järvinen (2008) where he attempts to define suspense in the context of games. Järvinen (2008) argues that there are two core things applicable from the OCC-model in the study of games. Firstly, "*games privilege so-called prospect-based emotions that are always focusing on events and their outcomes*" (Järvinen, 2008, 356). Secondly, "*suspense is a fundamental emotion of player experiences, because it is a compound emotion where the emotions of hope, fear, and uncertainty come together*" (Järvinen, 2008, 356).

Other prominent scholars of the topic of suspense are cognitive psychologist Dolf Zillmann and Peter Vorderer from the field of media psychology. They have presented theories and concepts that have influenced the researchers of suspense in their own field, and also game scholars in their attempts on defining suspense in video games. Järvinen (2008), for example, has used Zillmann's theories of mood management and selective exposure as well as Vorderer's (et al., 2004) notions of suspend disbelief, and affinity and empathy with the characters. In addition, Vorderer has used Zillmann's theories and combined them with his own notions and has found connections between arousal,

identification, flow, presence, involvement, and immersion, as well as enjoyment, when trying to define suspense in online games and media (Reich and Vorderer, 2015).

Video games are different compared to other media. They are interactive (Salen & Zimmerman, 2004; Van Vught & Schott, 2012; Mukherjee, 2015). Suspense entices the players into video games and retains their interest for the upcoming events. In addition, the experience of suspense in video games differs from the experiences of suspense compared to other media, e.g. films. The special nature of suspense in video games is that it is triggered by the player's capability to act, which fundamentally differs from films. (Van Vught & Schott, 2012.)

In game studies, Frome and Smuts (2004), have built their definition of suspense on the viewer's helplessness, a convention borrowed from films, and tried to apply it directly to the players in games by stating, that "*helplessness heightens suspense because it foregrounds its key elements: fear, hope, and uncertainty.*" (Frome & Smuts, 2004, 14) Even though this straight-forward approach is true in films, and in some occasions in video games as well, the argument of *helpless spectator* is too narrow approach to fully explain suspense in the context of video games. One of the fundamentals of video games is action. However, this conflicts with the idea of suspense occurring merely as the players "*inability to act*" in video games (Van Vught & Schott, 2012, 95). The theory of *helpless spectator* is useful when studying player experience in story-driven games and in cut-scenes, and especially combined with the theories of identification and empathy, but even in those occasions the theory is too imperfect, as it neglects the characteristics of video games. Frome and Smuts (2004) have also claimed that in video games every event that has not yet occurred is also uncertain for the player, i.e. the player cannot know in advance how the game progresses, and the only exception is when replaying the game. This notion is true to some extent, although can be argued against with the concepts of assemblage and schema, as pointed out later in this chapter.

Van Vught and Schott (2012) have taken the theory of *helpless spectator* under inspection and defined suspense in video games more thoroughly, while keeping in mind the participatory nature of games, and its relationship on player experience and suspense, as well as other characteristics of games. On top of the suspense type of *helpless spectator*, Van Vught and Schott (2012) have found a total of three different kinds of suspense in the context of games. The first one is called *empathetic suspense* (ibid.). This theory is

conducted from the humanistic and psychological traditions, and it offers a more thorough approach than the one presented by Frome & Smuts (2004), which is conducted solely from film theory. However, the concept of *empathetic suspense* is problematic in video games, especially in occasions where the players use the characters merely as vessels to achieve their goals and does not treat them similarly as characters in films, where the viewers can invest their “*emotional involvement*” (Van Vught & Schott, 2012, 102). Instead, they argue that video games are more played “*for personal success*”, where players can “*experience the fear of failure together with a desire to succeed*” (Van Vught & Schott, 2012, 98). Because of the game’s characteristics and its uncertain outcome, the players are experiencing something Van Vught and Schott (2012) have named *competitive suspense*, which is experienced in all games. Players ability to trigger suspense underlines the special nature of suspense type called *competitive suspense*, and the third type of suspense used in this master’s thesis.

Van Vught and Schott (2012) introduce the theory of suspense in *anticipation of a startle*, which is used as an essential game element in survival horror games. The startle can be done, for example, with a figure or object suddenly appearing, or with a loud sound. Normally the viewer, or as in video games, the player, can expect this event to happen, thus the term anticipation. Even though this type of suspense can normally be considered happening only in fictional situations, where the player is emotionally involved, van Vught and Schott (2012) argue that this type of suspense occurs in abstract games, as well. They use the pool game *Blast Billiards* (Mousebreaker Ltd, 2004) as an example, where the player needs to succeed within a time limit, or the bombs go off, triggering *anticipation of a startle*. When the player advances and gets better, *anticipation of a startle* fades slowly away removing the suspense altogether. (Ibid.)

The four types of suspense are: *anticipation of a startle*, *competitive suspense*, *empathetic suspense*, and *helpless spectator* (Table 1). However, these suspense types are incomplete without discussing the various sides of suspense, and how suspense as an emotional experience overlaps with the concepts introduced previously in this master’s thesis. In his doctoral dissertation, *Games Without Frontiers - Theories and Methods for Game Studies and Design*, Järvinen (2008) has argued extensively about the gameplay experience of suspense. Firstly, “*emotions of suspense, as a combination of hope, fear, and uncertainty, is elicited in gaming encounters.*” (Järvinen, 2008, 38) Secondly, “*goals and challenges are introduced for the players, possibly unexpectedly, and uncertainty about their*

resolution creates hopes, fears, and suspense.” (Järvinen, 2008, 195) Thirdly, he adds that game elements are “*embodiments for eliciting the emotion of suspense through hope, fear, and uncertainty.*” (Järvinen, 2008, 199) With these statements, Järvinen shares the humanistic view on suspense as a combination of fear and hope and uncertainty, and in addition ties the concept of suspense in the context of video games. Gaming encounters, goals, and challenges are all essential game elements, which constitute a game, and therefore suspense is an essential in games, as it intertwines with the mentioned elements.

Table 1. Different types of suspense

Type of suspense	Definition
Anticipation of the startle	<i>“Suspense relating to the fear of being startled. This is typically employed within the horror genre, where audiences receive a startle by the sudden appearance of a figure or object. When accompanied by a sharp loud sound, this has the effect of making the viewer jump. Since the event is not entirely unexpected the viewer experiences suspense in anticipation of the startle.”</i> (Van Vught & Schott, 2012, 96)
Competitive suspense	<i>“In our desire for personal success we are able to experience the fear of failure together with a desire to succeed. Due to the uncertainty of the game’s outcome we experience a mode of suspense we term competitive suspense.”</i> (Van Vught & Schott, 2012, 98)
Empathetic suspense	<i>“When the viewer’s knowledge is experienced in parallel with the character, empathetic suspense is a more likely response. This form of suspense is ‘shared’ with the character as imagined outcomes, implications and consequences occur in sync with a character’s on-screen reasoning and experiences.”</i> (Van Vught & Schott, 2012, 96)
Helpless spectator	<i>“Generating suspense not by highlighting their unique ability to be interactive, but, to the contrary, limiting interactivity at key points, thereby turning players into helpless spectators like those that watch films.”</i> (Frome & Smuts, 2004, 31)

Järvinen (2008) deepens his argumentation by stating, that “*The potential for emotions based on events is in their prospect*”. This statement includes questions about the events, their resolutions and, what they promise for the player during the gameplay experience (ibid.). In addition, questions such as are these events meaningful and does “*the player invests effort into trying to make the outcome desirable for oneself or for others*” (Järvinen, 2008, 214), are crucial. From the player’s point of view, suspense can be analysed as a mixture of ‘*prospect-based emotions*’ on events of the game. Emotions, such as satisfaction, relief, surprise, hope, fear, shock, fears-confirmed, and suspense are elicited during the gameplay (ibid.). Furthermore, emotions that are experienced are connected to the gameplay events and to the prospect of those events. According to Järvinen (2008, 214), these “*prospect-based emotions are fundamentally related to goals-*

of-self” and *“are subject to uncertainty”*. He continues that the central *“events in games are performances with game mechanics”*, and that the personal abilities of each player *“function as uncertainty factors”* (Järvinen, 2008, 214). He concludes, that according to observations above, *“suspense as a compound element of hope, fear, and uncertainty reveals itself as the key emotion in gaming encounters”* (Järvinen, 2008, 214). Notions of *“prospect-based emotions”* that are in the focal point of different *“events and their outcomes”*, and the *“fundamentality of suspense as a player experience”* (Järvinen, 2008, 356), intertwines with several key concepts discussed in the previous chapters. Firstly, when discussing games as formal systems in chapter 2.3, the concept of information theory systems was introduced, which emphasized the delicate balance between freedom and control in video games. For example, if the game is overly determined, it results that the game has too little freedom and uncertainty for the player. Vice versa, too much freedom results the game being a chaos and the uncertainty becomes overwhelming (Salen & Zimmerman, 2004). Thus, information and uncertainty are both connected to freedom, and this junction is at the hearth of meaningful gameplay. Furthermore, this boils down to the player’s ability to make choices in the system of the game, which was discussed in chapter 2.2, in the context of anatomy of choice (ibid.).

These argumentations are incomplete without combining the theories of cognition and emotions by Oatley and Jenkins (1996) in the context of games as systems. Firstly, cognition, as a result of perception and learning, includes also the process of knowing (Järvinen, 2008). It enables opinions, beliefs, or knowledge of objects, agents, and events (Oatley and Jenkins, 1996; Järvinen, 2008). Secondly, emotions hold a cognitive bias (Järvinen, 2008). Information acquired and the player’s interpretations of the representations of the system turns into knowledge. However, differences of the players cognitive bias results to subjective emotions during the gameplay. In addition, different playing styles and, e.g. strategies result that the players have different cognitive schemas about the various representations of the system, such as events, agents, and objects. Järvinen (2008, 151) describes this as a *“perceptual-phenomenological mental construction”* which *“constitutes a kind of ‘gestalt’ of the game system as a whole with interacting parts”*. This notion shares similarities of a synthesis of video games (see chapters 2.5 and 4.2). As discussed, several scholars have emphasised a synthesis of video games, where the game’s elements of story and formal, and the different environments, combined with the player participatory action, intertwined create the gameplay

experience (Consalvo & Dutton, 2006; Fernández-Vara, 2015; Mukherjee, 2015), and Järvinen's (2008) notion includes the emotion of suspense in to the mix.

Because of the complexity of this issue, the vast amount of information should be categorized for clarification. In this master's thesis, two different, yet overlapping categories are defined: '*information acquired from the system*', and '*earlier knowledge of the player*'. With this approach, system-based information includes all the information that can be acquired from the half-real game system (Salen & Zimmerman, 2004; Juul, 2005; Mukherjee, 2015). The information is presented by various game elements during the gameplay in the events of the game and on the prospect of their outcomes, that are influenced by the player's subjective preferences and abilities (Salen & Zimmerman 2004; Ermi & Mäyrä, 2005; Järvinen, 2008). Furthermore, this information is not known by the player before the gameplay activity and are acquired during the gameplay from the system. The information is presented multimodally for the player starting from the device(s) and the interface the player is using to interact with the game, varying from simple and abstract games, such as *Pong*, to complex graphical and possibly multisensory representations merging real life. However, this information, although present, is not necessarily acquired by the player (Ermi & Mäyrä, 2005). The latter is the information of the player before the gameplay occurs, i.e. the earlier knowledge of the player. This includes everything the player knows, and e.g. skills, which have an impact on how the player interprets the information from the game, as well as what information the player acquires from the game (Ermi & Mäyrä, 2005; Järvinen, 2008). Player's earlier knowledge includes aspects of schemas (Douglas & Hargadon, 2000; Salen & Zimmerman, 2004; Ermi & Mäyrä, 2005; Järvinen, 2009; Mukherjee, 2015), assemblage (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004; Ermi & Mäyrä, 2005; Mukherjee, 2015; DeLanda, 2016), transmediality (Jenkins, 2007) and genre conventions (Whalley, 1997; Farrell, 2003; Apperley, 2006; Wolf, 2008; Berger, 2018) as discussed throughout this master's thesis. However, both '*information acquired from the system*' and '*player's earlier knowledge*' are intertwined and influence on each other during the gameplay activity similarly as discussed previously (Ermi & Mäyrä, 2005; Järvinen, 2008; Mukherjee, 2015).

The above argumentation can be approach with two interrelated examples. Firstly, in *TWD:SI*, suspense is created, for example, by zombies (game elements) approaching (game mechanic), when the player character (agent) is trying to solve (game mechanic) a puzzle (game element) within a time limit (game element). This event, or gaming

encounter, is in fact the information acquired from the system, and how the player plays and experiences the event is directly related to the player's knowledge, e.g. schemas. Secondly, when the player is trying to solve a puzzle in *TWD:SI*, the player uses the earlier knowledge combined with the information acquired from the system to overcome this puzzle. A player who is familiar with the genre (action-adventure) and the theme (survival-horror), is more likely to solve the puzzle, as the player knows the schemas of the genre and the theme. In addition, this type of player has a more thorough playing experience, and thus, the experience of suspense. The player who is familiar with the genre, but not with the theme, might also solve the puzzle with the same effort, but the experience would be quite different, as she would not have the same knowledge of the theme. Vice versa, the player lacking the knowledge on the genre, but being a fan of the theme, would also have a quite different experience. Information has an impact on how player plays the game and how the player experiences the game. Information, as a combination of both the system-based information and the player's knowledge, is therefore a vital part of the layers of the guideline presented in chapter 7.

5.4 New definition of suspense in video games

There were two aims set in the Introduction chapter. The first was to find a specific view of suspense in video games such as *TWD:SI* and the other was to present a guideline for conducting the qualitative textual analysis. The previous chapters seek an answer for the question of *What is suspense in video games?* Chapter 5.3 introduced four types of suspense occurring in video games: *anticipation of the startle*, *competitive suspense*, *empathetic suspense*, and *helpless spectator* (see Table 1). However, the four types of suspense are inadequate for defining suspense in video games. To answer the question properly, next a new definition of suspense is introduced.

The foundation of the new definition is the well-established notion of suspense as a '*combination of fear and hope and uncertain outcome*' (Ortony et al., 1990; Järvinen, 2008; Van Vught & Schott, 2012). Keeping in mind the characteristics of games, which are also used as foundation for formulating the four-layered guideline presented later in this master's thesis, resulted that some extra additions are in place for defining suspense more precisely in the context of video games. As stated in the previous chapters, suspense is a '*subjective emotional experience of the player*' (Järvinen, 2008; Van Vught & Schott,

2012). ‘*Subjective*’ as it happens to a specific player in a gaming encounter in a video game, and an ‘*emotional experience*’ as stated earlier as the nature of suspense (ibid.). All of this occurs in ‘*response to the information acquired from the system*’, i.e. from video games, ‘*combined to the player’s earlier knowledge*’, including schemas, assemblages, transmediality and genre conventions (Oatley & Jenkins, 1996; Whalley, 1997; Douglas & Hargadon, 2000; Farrell, 2003; Deleuze & Guattari, 2004; Salen & Zimmerman, 2004; Sheldon, 2004; Ermi & Mäyrä, 2005; McGregor-Wise, 2005; Apperley, 2006; Phillips, 2006; Jenkins, 2007; Wolf, 2008; Järvinen, 2008; Mukherjee, 2015; DeLanda, 2016; Berger, 2018). Based on this, a new definition of suspense in video games is formulated as following:

Suspense in video games is a subjective emotional experience of the player elicited from the combination of fear, hope, and uncertain outcome in response to the information acquired from the system combined to the player’s earlier knowledge.

6 METHODOLOGY

Game studies is a young discipline, originated from the beginning of this millennium (Aarseth, 2001; Mukherjee, 2015). It has borrowed conventions from other disciplines making interdisciplinary and research with multiple methodologies integral part of game studies (Mäyrä, 2009). Research has been conducted with both qualitative and quantitative approaches (Lankoski & Björk, 2015). Focus has been on games, play, or players (ibid.), and due to their nature, the best results are achieved when they are studied intertwined (Mäyrä, 2009). There are many ways of conducting analysis of games, such as formal analysis or analysis of games as information systems (Lankoski & Björk, 2015).

This chapter discusses the methodology of qualitative textual analysis. First, the history of qualitative data analysis that originates from social studies is briefly introduced. Then, the methodology of qualitative data analysis and qualitative analysis of games are introduced in a general level. Lastly, the study conducted in this master's thesis is described.

6.1 Qualitative analysis as a methodology

Qualitative research has a long history. It was first conducted over a century ago (Gobo 2005), and the origins of the qualitative methods can be placed in the era of the first decades of the 20th century's social studies of the Chicago School (Jovanovič, 2011; Gobo, 2005). During a 40-year-period there was a struggle for dominance between quantitative and qualitative approaches: the first attempts to define qualitative methodology appeared in the late 1960s (Gobo, 2005). The struggle continued, but the '*renaissance*', or the '*second return*', of qualitative methods began in the 1980s and the 1990s with increased popularity of the methodology (Jovanovič, 2011; Gobo, 2005).

In a larger scale, qualitative research is included in the empirical approaches to study human behaviour. Empirical approaches are divided from the non-empirical that are normally used by humanists, such as philosophers, where reasoning and human intuition are central. However, the weakness of non-empirical approaches is that it counts humans as rational beings, which we seldom are. To overcome this obstacle, empirical approaches rely on data collection, which should give a better understanding of human behaviour.

Difficulties of this approach is the nature of subjectivity of collected data, which in turn should be analysed objectively. To minimize possible problems, an empirical study should be carefully prepared beforehand. Based on the interpretations of data collected, empiricists should then be able to reach the right conclusions with minimum alternative explanations. (Lankoski & Björk, 2015.)

Empirical research can be further divided into quantitative and qualitative data analysis strategies. The first one considers that humans are subjective, complex creatures, and the aim of the research is to measure them precisely and in a replicable manner. Possible measurement errors are to be corrected by future researchers, until scientific consensus is reached, which could take decades. Although qualitative take on humans is similar, as they also are considered as subjective, complex creatures, the qualitative data analysis is dissimilar. Opposed to quantitative research, the aim of qualitative research is to explore this complexity among humans. Normally, data collection techniques in a qualitative approach are open-ended surveys or focus groups, where the data of respondents offers broad trends and themes. Mixing these empirical approaches is also an option. There have already been studies in games where quantitative approach is used first to build a foundation and then the study has continued with the use of qualitative approach, or vice versa. However, these mixed methods have seldom been innovative, as they normally only combine data from interviews and surveys. Both the quantitative and the qualitative approaches have their pros and cons in terms of interpretations and feasibility. A major upside for the quantitative approach is the possibility to replicate the approach and the results of the study. This is more difficult in the case of qualitative approach, where even verifying the results can be a problem. However, the abundance of data acquired through qualitative approaches is a major advantage. In some cases, the massive amount of qualitative data may even dictate the presentation of the study, where the results are left out of the way of analysis and discussion. (Lankoski & Björk, 2015.)

Increased study of games has thrived to find ways to apply old conventions that best suit studying this new discipline. For example, the empirical research of video games has been extensive, and done mainly from two viewpoints: the games themselves or the players, covering wide range of topics (Consalvo & Dutton, 2006). However, the transition to study video games with old conventions has been problematic (Mukherjee, 2015). The qualitative research of digital games shares distinctive resemblance to the qualitative research of social sciences in the previous century that was discussed at the beginning of

this chapter. Similarly, as the research of social science until the 1960s, the previous study of games has been less explanatory in terms of how the research itself has been conducted (Consalvo & Dutton, 2006; Mukherjee, 2015), resulting in the need for methodologies to critically analyse video games.

One of the first attempts to create a methodological toolkit for qualitative analysis of video games is the study of Consalvo and Dutton (2006). Scholars, such as Aarseth (2001; 2003), had previously addressed the need for methodology, but Consalvo and Dutton (2006) were the first to compile a toolkit to aid researchers to critically analyse video games. The toolkit has four separate, yet intertwined sections that are crucial components of a video game for play. This means, that all the sections can be analysed individually, but a more holistic analysis is achieved when all the sections are analysed together. The sections are called Object Inventory, Interface Study, Interaction Map, and Gameplay Log. With the critical analysis of these four sections, various studies could be conducted by e.g. developing research questions or determining how to explain games with different theories. (Ibid.)

Video games are different than other media. The uniqueness of video games has even raised questions on whether they should be even considered medium or would artefacts be a more suitable term (Hunicke et al., 2004). For example, Consalvo and Dutton (2006) stress that watching a film differs from playing a game, as playing as a method is a far more complicated process than merely watching. Even though they make valid argumentation of what should be taken into consideration while playing, they do not explicitly explain what playing is while analysing a game. Consalvo and Dutton (2006) indicate that their methodological toolkit would be the solution for this by concluding:

“As of yet, there has been no clear and careful elaboration of a systematic method for examining how these various elements operate singly and in conjunction to constitute the "text" of a game, and what the larger significance of that game might then be”, (Consalvo & Dutton, 2006, para. 8)

However, without a more thorough explanation of what playing while analysing is, and what text means, the use of their toolkit is inadequate for critically analysing digital games. The concept of (w)reading used as a method in the Walkthrough in this master’s thesis is a way of tackling this issue, and is more thoroughly discussed in chapter 6.2.

In recent years, several other academics have emphasised the textual analysis of video games, which originally was a methodology used in the social sciences and humanities (Férrandez-Vara, 2015). For example, Clara Férrandez-Vara (2015, 5) explains how games are texts, and the understanding of this, is a “*foundation to a more sophisticated discourse on games*”. She also offers insight on how to conduct a textual analysis of games by providing methods that are derived from humanistic origin, although she remarks that she does not offer strict guidelines for it and encourages analysers to “*find their own way into games*” (ibid., p. 4). The process in brief is to use inductive reasoning and analyse the ‘text’ to understand a specific topic (ibid.), such as suspense. People tend to interpret and make meanings of texts even with common issues, such as via conversations about films or sports with friends (Salen & Zimmerman, 2004; Férrandez-Vara, 2015). This informal text analysis is a part of a larger textual analysis, which is a way of discourse between communities, varying from fans, to journalists, and all the way to scholars, as well. Oppositely, formal textual analysis enables discussion of games with systematic, structured, and methodical ways. This, in turn, should result in more discussion, as the understanding of games increases (Férrandez-Vara, 2015). Moreover, game studies are an interdisciplinary field, and with formal methodology the discourse can broaden, not only between game scholars, but between disciplines as well (Mäyrä, 2009). Key to understanding games “*is not playing a lot, but playing well*”, and the textual analysis should be done without value judgement (Férrandez-Vara, 2015, 10). There should be no labelling between ‘good’ or ‘bad’ games that limits the selection of games under analysis. Playing well is, for example, understanding and interpreting actions, social aspects, or structures of games, or the transmediality of games, to name a few (ibid.). Games are complex systems, and the understanding of the elements which constitute games, and the connections of those, is crucial (Consalvo & Dutton, 2006; Mäyrä, 2009; Férrandez-Vara, 2015). The goal of analysing games should be on how we make sense of games, and we can learn that from games of all types. Textual analysis of games can be conducted from two different angles: structuralist or post-structuralist approach. The first approach includes strategies, such as comparing different games from the point of view of topics or design, to name a few. Conducting a post-structuralist study could be done from the angle of context of playing a game, or how a certain game is understood by audiences. Strategies also include different processes on how to make sense of a game while playing. (Férrandez-Vara, 2015.) Game analysis can be divided into three areas: the context, the formal aspects, and the game overview, which all

comprise numerous “*building blocks*”, as Fernández-Vara (2015, 13) has named them. However, these areas are interrelated, meaning that conducting an analysis usually cuts through different areas, and the buildings blocks can be placed in different areas (ibid.).

6.2 Qualitative textual analysis of *The Walking Dead: Season 1*

Games are vastly complex, and the study of games have been interdisciplinary and done with multiple methods (Salen & Zimmerman, 2004; Mäyrä, 2009; Mukherjee, 2015). For example, video games have been studied as systems (Crawford, 1997; Salen & Zimmerman, 2004; Nacke, 2014), and as texts (Murray, 1997; Aarseth, 1997; Montfort, 2001; Mukherjee, 2015). However, hybrid nature of video games should not be ignored: the player’s participatory action is required for constructing their structures (Salen & Zimmerman, 2004; Van Vught & Schott, 2012; Mukherjee, 2015). This complexity calls the need to find ways to discuss video games in a more applicable manner (Consalvo and Dutton, 2006; Mäyrä, 2009; Fernández-Vara, 2015; Mukherjee, 2015). The study presented in this master’s thesis is a part of continuum in studying games in all their complexity, where the game, the player, and the gameplay are intertwined.

In the Introduction Chapter, both the research problem and the aim of the study were set to examine the subjective gameplay experience eliciting suspense in *The Walking Dead: Season 1* (2012). Based on this, RQ was defined as: *How the experience of suspense is elicited through the meaningful gameplay experience?* There are many approaches that could be used to study meaningful gameplay experiences which are normally conducted with large focus groups, for example, in studies of Ermi and Mäyrä (2005) or Oliver et al. (2015). However, considering the complexity and subjectivity of the topic, the qualitative textual analysis is suitable for conducting this type of study.

Because of the nature of the selected methodology, the study presented here is twofold, including the Walkthrough and the qualitative textual analysis. The first part is conducted by the method of (w)reading: a concept, which emphasises the supplementary of reading and writing processes between the game and the player (Mukherjee, 2015) and which was discussed more thoroughly in chapter 4.3. The result of the (w)reading process is the text of the Walkthrough which is used as the data of the qualitative textual analysis when tackling the research question. The twofolded process combines many disciplines: game

studies, media studies, literature studies and social studies, as well as, humanistic and psychological approaches.

The Walkthrough is the written text of the subjective, emotional and meaningful gameplay experience eliciting suspense. It highlights the complexity of games, where the elements of both formal and story, are intertwined in formation of the gameplay experience. In addition, the text emphasis the player behaviour and the meaning making processes of the player during the gameplay. The text consists from a total of 122 events of five episodes of *TWD:SI*, and it is a description of the first and single time of the gameplay experience. The reason for this approach was due to suspense being a prospect-based emotion and based on uncertainty (Ortony et al. 1990; Järvinen, 2008). That is why the first time of playing is the most important one, as exactly same situation in terms of suspense is impossible to duplicate.

From the Walkthrough, consisting of 122 events, only 13 were taken under inspection. These events were selected because they include specific choices matter situations. Firstly, all the selected events are branching. Secondly, the choice the player needs to make is a matter of life or death of a character. The selected choices matter situations are illustrated in an image of GamesBeat's visual guide (Killham, 2013).

Technically, the (w)reading process included writing the data immediately in the middle of gameplay. The writing process was done in moments of natural pauses. These moments were, e.g. when the game was in standstill, as the player was in total control of the events occurring, or after every event when the gameplay was paused. This was done for not to intentionally interfere on the experience of suspense, which sometimes was impossible to achieve. With the method of (w)reading, it was possible to get detailed, first-hand and pre-analyzed textual data about gameplay experience. In addition, the documented data is more accessible in a form of a text and enables further textual analysis. The same would not be possible if the method would be to play several events sequentially and then try to remember and write the data.

The selected text of the Walkthrough is used as a data for the qualitative textual analysis by answering RQ: *How the experience of suspense is elicited through the meaningful gameplay experience?* For better explaining the area of the study, a guideline for the qualitative textual analysis is introduced next.

7 GUIDELINE FOR THE QUALITATIVE TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

In this chapter, the guideline for conducting the qualitative textual analysis of the meaningful gameplay experience eliciting suspense is presented. The main reason for the multisided and complex introduction of the topics of game, player, and gameplay, and their intertwined relationship in relation of suspense, is to move the discussion of video games from binaries towards multiplicity. Even though a massive task, the amount of work invested in this master's thesis has been necessary for understanding the complexity of the meaningful gameplay experience in cinematic, story-driven video games, such as *The Walking Dead: Season 1*. Simultaneously, the study has only begun and hopefully the study presented here encourages other scholars as well to study these topics even further.

The guideline constitutes of four layers: the topic, and the intertwined layers of game, player, and gameplay. Layers are further defined in the context of the study. First layer discusses the topic of suspense, including the selected theories, concepts, and models, which are applicable in the context of the game under analysis. Second layer discusses about the characteristics of *TWD:SI*. Third layer discusses about the player. In the case of *TWD:SI*, the player is seen as a (w)reader, who is influenced by the analytic nature of playing the game. Fourth layer discusses the meaningful gameplay experience. All layers are analysed through the lens of suspense. The layers of *Topic of suspense*, *Game of The Walking Dead: Season 1*, *Player as a (w)reader*, and *Gameplay experience*, are all connected in different ways that are related to the issues of 'information acquired' and 'the player's earlier knowledge'. Thus, both these issues are crucial for understanding not only suspense as a subjective experience, but also all the layers, which are discussed next.

7.1 Topic of suspense

This sub-chapter presents the first layer of the guideline and discusses the topic of suspense in the context of *TWD:SI*. As discussed in chapter 5, suspense is a core element of all types of games and a subjective emotional player experience. Different game elements, and e.g. the relationship of goals and ways of which conflicts with achieving those goals, elicit various types of suspense during the gameplay experience (Järvinen,

2008; Van Vught & Schott, 2012). For example, choices matter situations are central element of dialogues in *TWD:SI*, and it overlaps with the concept of player's choice, which is at the core of suspense (Salen & Zimmerman, 2004). In chapter 5.3, suspense was categorised in four different types: *an anticipation of the startle*, *competitive suspense*, *empathetic suspense*, and *helpless spectator*. Furthermore, a new definition of suspense was introduced, which is especially applicable in the case of cinematic, story-driven video games, such as *TWD:SI* (see chapter 5.4). The new definition was formulated as a subjective emotional experience of the player elicited from the combination of fear, hope, and uncertain outcome in response to the information acquired from the system combined to the player's earlier knowledge. The notions of both 'information acquired', and 'the player's earlier knowledge', are key issues on, not only discussing various aspects of the topic of suspense, but also for discussing the intertwined layers of the guideline presented next.

7.2 Game of *The Walking Dead: Season 1*

From the theory foundation presented in this master's thesis, it is deduced that *TWD:SI* is a complex half-real system, where the elements of formal and story intertwine in the intersection of the game, the player and the gameplay. Considering its central characteristics, *TWD:SI* is defined as a story-driven action-adventure-survival-horror, with elements of interactive drama. Key elements and mechanics of action, navigation, exploration, tool usage, puzzles, dialogues, cut-scenes and time limit are both crucial for defining the game under scrutiny, and essential in the formation of the gameplay experience eliciting suspense. The rules and the boundaries of the game world of *TWD:SI* directly influence on the authority and control of the game, and the linearity set restrictions and limitations to the player action. Furthermore, the episodic structure constituted from different and sequential events, forms a linear, yet branching storyline in the crucial choices matter situations during the gameplay. *TWD:SI* includes a total of five episodes, a convention borrowed from films. In fact, the game includes several borrowed conventions from other media. The predefined linear branching storyline influences e.g. both the authorship of the story, and the structure of the storyline each time the game is played. Creating dramatic arc, for example, is a central element borrowed from other media that is used in *TWD:SI* in eliciting emotions, such as suspense. Concept of cinematography e.g. camera angles and compositions, and the use of sounds e.g. in

eliciting emotions, are also familiar from films. However, all of the above culminates in the numerous dialogue situations of *TWD:SI* during gameplay, in addition with multiple cut-scenes, and has resulted that *TWD:SI* can be defined as an interactive drama, as well. In this master's thesis the survival-horror is considered in two separate, yet intertwined ways. Firstly, survival-horror is considered as a video game genre, that combines both core game elements, and game mechanics of adventure and action to survival-horror. Secondly, survival-horror includes the conventions used in other media, in order to elicit emotions and feelings, such as fear, horror, and suspense.

In addition to the game world of *TWD:SI*, different environments of it, categorized in formal, experiential, and cultural systems, are studied intertwined for the best result in the qualitative textual analysis of this master's thesis. As a half-real system, *TWD:SI* expands the boundaries of the game world to consisting the whole assemblage of The Walking Dead universe. For example, the concept of transmedial storytelling (Jenkins, 2007) is crucial for understanding the many sides of *TWD:SI*, and is discussed more thoroughly in chapter 7.3. In addition, the concept of assemblage is important for understanding the multiplicity of The Walking Dead (later referred as TWD). For example, the qualitative textual analysis of *TWD:SI* plugs into TWD assemblage. This assemblage includes, e.g. the entire series of video games of, elements of and the player's individual gameplays of TWD. As video games of TWD are transmedial, the TWD assemblage includes also other media representations, such as the tv-series and comic books. Using the concept of assemblage, numerous other, intertwined assemblages can be defined. For example, *TWD:SI* is a video game, which results that it plugs into the video game assemblage. The theme of *TWD:SI* is horror, and thus, it intersects with the horror assemblage, as well. The game includes elements of interactive movie, adventure and action, resulting that the mentioned genres form both their individual assemblages, and the assemblage of genres, as well. Simply said, the TWD assemblage includes everything that relates to TWD, and moreover plugs into every assemblage that it intersects with. As every assemblage of TWD is intertwined, this results that every assemblage influences the gameplay experience, as well.

7.3 Player as a (w)reader

As discussed in chapter 4.3, the concept of (w)reading emphasises the supplementarity of reading and writing processes of the machinic text, that is characterised by all forms of narrative media, including video games. However, because of the special characteristics of video games, the machinic process is formed where play, writing, and reading are complexly intertwined (Mukherjee, 2015). In the context of this master's thesis, the concept of (w)reading is central for understanding both the processes of gameplay, and the player's role. In the study presented here, the player of *TWD:SI* is seen as a (w)reader. In addition, the player is an analyser of *TWD:SI* and the concept of (w)reading is used as a data collection method for the text of the Walkthrough, that is further used in the qualitative textual analysis. The player's role as a (w)reader-analyser is influenced by not only the subjective nature of the topic of suspense, but also 'information acquired from the system' and 'the player's earlier knowledge'.

As discussed in sub-chapter 7.2, as a half-real system, *TWD:SI* expands the boundaries of the game world to consisting the whole assemblage of The Walking Dead universe. Even though the emphasis of the qualitative textual analysis of this master's thesis is in a single gameplay experience of *TWD:SI*, the concepts of assemblages, schemas, genre conventions, and transmediality cannot be ignored. These concepts influence both the representations of the game and the player's perceptions of the game, as well as 'information acquired' and 'the player's earlier knowledge'.

For better understanding games such as *TWD:SI*, a concept of transmedia storytelling should also be discussed. In chapter 2.4, it was defined as scattered "*elements of a fiction*" where "*each medium makes its own unique contribution to the unfolding of the story*" (Jenkins, 2007, para. 1). For example, The Walking Dead franchise consists of e.g. tv-series, comic books, and games on multiple platforms. To fully understand the whole TWD universe, the information scattered in different media should be gathered by the player. Sharing the notion by Juul (2005), the stories in transmedia universes are often set in a world both complex and fictional, and include overlapping stories and characters, rather than bases on specific plots or individual characters (Jenkins, 2007). This description fits well in the complex fictional worlds of cinematic, story-driven games, such as *TWD:SI*. As discussed in chapter 2.4, Jenkins (2007) has argued about texts in transmedia and their nature of presenting, e.g. gaps in the story or plots that are hinted.

This means that for better understanding a game such as *TWD:SI*, is directly linked to other media that are connected to *TWD:SI*, for example. With this comment the discussion of the storytelling and game-text moves towards paratextuality (Mukherjee, 2015). In addition, this includes what is not represented in the game, but what is possibly previously known by the player, whether it is something about The Walking Dead universe or the conventions affiliated with it, resulting varying interpretations of the playing session. For example, the player of the game of *TWD:SI*, resembling the comic books by the iconography, and tv-series and films by the storytelling, makes notions based on the earlier knowledge and the information acquired from the system of the game. Based on these, the player makes also assumptions on what will happen, or what has happened between events, which both are not represented to the player. The transmediality can offer more insight for the player to interpret and assume, thus resulting in a more in-depth gameplay experience.

7.4 Gameplay experience

Several scholars, such as Consalvo and Dutton (2006), Fernández-Vara (2015), and Mukherjee (2015), have emphasised a synthesis of video games, where the game's elements of story and formal and the different environments, as well as the player's participatory action intertwined create the gameplay experience. Because of the special characteristics of which video games are constituted, they cannot be understood solely with the traditional methods. Furthermore, same scholars have called new ways for the textual analysis of video games (Consalvo & Dutton, 2006; Fernández-Vara, 2015; Mukherjee, 2015). The qualitative textual analysis conducted in this master's thesis is a part of continuum of these new ways.

The foundation for understanding the gameplay experience is on the SCI-model by Ermi and Mäyrä (2005) and their definitions of the gameplay experience. However, for studying games such as *TWD:SI*, and especially conducting the qualitative textual analysis of the subject, other concepts and theories are needed for better understanding the complexity of the meaningful gameplay experience eliciting suspense. As discussed previously, gameplay experience occurs in half-real systems, which are governed by rules, consists of different individual elements and from the combination of them, such as formal and story elements, game mechanics, game environments, and events. Goals,

that the player aims to achieve, are hindered by the system, resulting in conflict. The synthesis of these, in response to the participatory action of the player, elicit subjective gameplay experience and emotions, such as suspense. (Salen & Zimmerman, 2004; Juul, 2005; Järvinen, 2008; Mukherjee, 2015.)

In previous chapters, the concepts of assemblage, transmediality, schemas, and genres have been discussed. In sub-chapters 7.2 and 7.3, the concepts have been further discussed in the context of *TWD:SI*. As these concepts are overlapping, they are important for understanding the meaningful gameplay experience, as well. For example, the information acquired from the system of the game, including all the elements, e.g. story, rules etc., intertwined with the player's earlier knowledge, including various assemblages, schemas, and genre conventions, form the gameplay experience (Ermi & Mäyrä, 2005; Mukherjee, 2015). The complexity of this experience can be explained with the help of the Zone of Becoming. As discussed in chapter 4.5, the concept is built on Deleuzoquattarian concepts, such as assemblage, schema, and machinic, and it can be understood as the creation of the machinic (w)reading process of video games (Mukherjee, 2015). For example, the text of the Walkthrough (Appendix 1) is a subjective description of the gameplay experience of *TWD:SI*, i.e. the (w)reading process occurring in the Zone of Becoming.

7.5 Guideline for the qualitative textual analysis in a nutshell

In brief, the guideline for the qualitative textual analysis of the subjective gameplay experience eliciting suspense of *TWD:SI* includes the following layers:

1. The topic of Suspense: including theories, concepts and models.
2. The game of *TWD:SI*: defined as story-driven action-adventure-survival-horror.
3. The player as a (w)reader: including subjective and analytic role.
4. The gameplay experience: meaningful, emotional and subjective experience in the Zone of Becoming.

The layers of the guideline are overlapping. This means that the gameplay and the player need to be examined intertwined to fully understand the topic, for example.

8 RESULTS

This chapter presents the results of the qualitative textual analysis of the subjective gameplay experience eliciting suspense in *TWD:SI*. In chapter 8.1, the results are summarized while in chapter 8.2 the selected events are analysed individually and in a chronological order. In this way the complexity of the meaningful gameplay experience and the connections of different events and episodes can be discussed. This technique highlights the nature of games as systems, in which both the story and play progress.

8.1 Table of suspense types in *The Walking Dead: Season 1*

Table 2 consists of 13 selected events from five episodes of the Walkthrough of *TWD:SI* (see Appendix). The events were selected because all of them include specific choices matter situations. Firstly, all the selected events are branching. Secondly, the choice the player needs to make is a matter of life or death of a character. The selected choices matter situations are illustrated in an image of GamesBeat's visual guide (Killham, 2013).

The first column of Table 2 indicates the episode and the event number. For example, E1e9 is event 9 of episode 1. The following columns list four types of suspense and the essential element of time limit for eliciting suspense (see chapter 5.3). New findings and other relevant notions which influence either meaningful gameplay experience or the experience of suspense are categorised in the last two columns. Different types of suspense and their connections, as well as their relationship to the meaningful gameplay experience of *TWD:SI* are discussed more thoroughly in chapter 8.2 and in chapter 9.

Table 2. Suspense types categorized by events of the Walkthrough

Event	Types of suspense				Time limit	New findings	Other notions
	Anticipation of the startle	Competitive suspense	Empathetic suspense	Helpless spectator			
E1e9	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		Empathy and sympathy.
E1e15			✓	✓			Foremost an emotional event. Empathy and Sympathy. Dialogues eliciting competitive suspense?
E1e19	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Unintended system elicited suspense.	
E2e1	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		Empathy and sympathy.
E2e7	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Anticipation of the action sequence. Anticipation of the startle not linked to time limit.	Player controls suspense.
E2e10	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Anticipation of the action sequence	The event continues after the decision.
E3e3		✓	✓	✓	✓	Unintended player elicited suspense.	
E3e11				✓	✓		Lack of subjectivity fade empathetic suspense. Dialogues eliciting competitive suspense?
E4e5			✓				Foremost an emotional event. Dialogues eliciting competitive suspense?
E4e33	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		The event was replayed.
E5e13&14	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Anticipation of the action sequence.	
E5e18	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Anticipation of the startle not linked to time limit.	The player set Clementine's well-being over Lee.

8.2 The qualitative textual analysis of *The Walking Dead: Season 1*

Before reading the qualitative textual analysis, there are a few things that needs clarification. Firstly, as defined in chapter 3.4, *TWD:SI* is an action-adventure-survival-horror game combining elements of interactive movie. Navigation, exploration, tool usage and puzzle, as well as, action are core elements of the game. In addition, the element of time limit is essential in many events of *TWD:SI*. Secondly, there is only one playable character in *TWD:SI*, named Lee. All the other characters are non-playable characters, which are called as NPCs in the following analysis. One of the key characters is Clementine, a little girl first introduced in E1e4, whose protecting and well-being is the player's main objective of the game. This is not presented explicitly, but becomes evident as the game progresses, as majority of the events revolve around Clementine's well-being. The conflicts between the main objective and the opposite forces of the game world surrounding Lee and Clementine become the essence of the subjective gameplay experience throughout the game. Thirdly, dialogues are a core element in *TWD:SI* and central for the gameplay experience and eliciting various emotions, such a suspense. Dialogues occur in different moments, where the player is in control and can choose from different dialogue options and interact verbally with NPCs. For example, *TWD:SI* begins with an interactive movie, where the driving police officer is having a dialogue with Lee, who is controlled by player character. The dialogue is presented in audio, but there is an option for subtitles also, which were selected in the Walkthrough to minimize the possibility to misinterpretation and to fully understand the dialogue. In the dialogues, options of maximum of four ways of replying are highlighted by red, green, blue, and yellow, resembling the coloring of the Xbox 360 controller's buttons. Although this should make the choosing of the dialogue option easier for the player, some problems occurred during the gameplay according to the Walkthrough. The problem of the dialogue options is that they seldom represented the will of the player. The dialogue options are limited, resulting that an appropriate dialogue line for the player character to say is not necessary provided. In addition, the player is shown only the written text of the dialogue beforehand, and not explicitly the expression or tone of which the player character speaks the dialogue. The coloring of the dialogue has an indication of it, but this is not hinted during the gameplay, and this notion is only based on the self-discovery of the player. The dialogue options are prone to misinterpretations and misreading, especially in the time limited and suspenseful situations. It is also noticeable that the dialogue options can

be mistakenly selected, resulting an unwanted result in the dialogue, and potentially have an unwanted influence on how the NPCs react to the player character onwards, and thus influencing drastically on the gameplay experience, including suspense. These things can increase the possibility of *unintended player elicited suspense*, which is more thoroughly discussed in the following qualitative textual analysis. On top of dialogues, *TWD:SI* includes conversations and notions. The first one occurs e.g. in cut scenes, where characters have conversations, and the player is merely a *helpless spectator*, and does not have a choice nor control to interact. The latter one is triggered during the moments of gameplay, for example, when the player interacts with the environment, resulting the player character to speak. Notions are e.g. thoughts or observations of the different things and the game environment.

Episode 1, event #9

The first choices matter situation under inspection is in E1e9, in which the player, controlling Lee, needs to decide which NPC to save: Duck or Shawn. By now, the player should have ‘acquired information’ of the central game mechanics and the game elements of *TWD:SI* e.g. dialogue, time limit, navigation, action, and puzzles, as well as the game characters.

E1e9 begins, when the dialogue between Lee and Hershel is interrupted with the sounds of a presumable zombie attack, eliciting *empathetic suspense*. However, according to the Walkthrough, the player is uncertain what will happen next as the player is not yet familiar with the action genre conventions of the game that are linked to *TWD* assemblage. In other words, the player has not acquired enough information from the game, and thus does not anticipate for an action sequence to occur. This result, for example, that *competitive suspense* did not elicit instantly. As the player is now a *helpless spectator*, a cut scene shows that Duck is in the driver’s seat of a tractor and a zombie is pulling him off the seat, while he is trying to break free from the hands of a certain death. Shawn is under the tractor and helplessly screaming for help. Although the player cannot be certain, it can be deduced, that Duck has accidentally driven over Shawn because of the zombie attack. Even though E1e9 is one of the earliest events of the game, the situation resembling a scene of a movie or a tv-show elicits strong *empathetic suspense* mainly for two reasons for the player. Firstly, all the characters of this event have been already introduced for the player in the previous events, and at least some attachment towards the

characters have been generated by this point. Moreover, all the characters of the farm are present at the event, resulting that the zombie attack have a direct influence on all the characters. In other words, all the information acquired from the system that occurred in the previous events and are currently occurring, has an influence on the gameplay experience and elicit certain type of suspense, which at this moment is *empathetic suspense*. Secondly, player's earlier knowledge has an influence on the gameplay experience and on eliciting suspense, as well. According to the Walkthrough, this event resembles the scenes of a horror movie for the player, and thus, the player's earlier knowledge of that genre and theme, as well as, various assemblages and schemas, elicited *empathetic suspense*. After a brief cut scene, the event turns quickly into an action sequence, instantly eliciting *competitive suspense*. There are a few important things that influence on the *competitive suspense*. These are specifically the system, the player, and the connection of these, which are discussed next. Although controlling Lee, when the player faces the choices matter situation, the system is in control by restricting the player's action by limiting the options in three: 1) save Duck, who is already at the hands of the zombies, 2) save Shawn, who is trapped under the vehicle, or 3) do nothing, an option that is not clearly indicated. To be more specific, *competitive suspense* is elicited when the player intentionally participates and chooses from three options presented above. The third option differs from the other two options, but it is nevertheless a participatory activity, if the player willingly decides not to take any action. After the decision, the player acts by simply navigating towards Duck's or Shawn's direction (or does nothing) and pressing the A-button to fight the zombie in a time limited situation. It is noteworthy that *competitive suspense* is crucially influenced by the time limit, as there is only a little time to decide on how to participate. In the Walkthrough, being in a limited control, the player chose to participate by the rules of the system, and the decision was to save Duck, eliciting *competitive suspense* on top of *empathetic suspense*. However, the decision was not done without hesitation. The player's first instinct was to save Duck, although he briefly thought about the option of saving Shawn, but as there was a strict time limit, he had to act quickly, and according to the Walkthrough by following his instinct. Simultaneously, as the player chose to save Duck, he thought that hopefully he saved at least other one of them, as saving both was not an option. In this branching moment of the gameplay, a cut scene begins, and the player turns into a *helpless spectator*. At this point, as the outcome of the situation is uncertain, the player felt a greater fear of losing both Duck and Shawn than he felt hope of either one of them to survive. The outcome is

quickly resolved, though, and a cut scene shows that Kenny joins in a fight to save his son resulting that Duck survives, which fulfills the hope of surviving and offering a momentarily relief in the situation. But choices matter, and Shawn is killed by zombies with other watching helplessly, as the time is limited for saving both, fulfilling the fear of his death and resulting in more uncertainty. The event progresses quickly and as a result of the situation Hershel blames everyone, especially Lee, for the death of his son and angrily kicks everyone out from the farm. This creates uncertainty on the following events and even though the climax of the event is passed, *empathetic suspense* continues in the following event. Physiologically, E1e9 is extremely suspenseful, as the symptoms experienced by the player in the Walkthrough indicate. From the beginning of the event, when the zombies attacked startling the player from the middle of a peaceful dialogue, until the end of the event, the player felt stressed, had sweaty palms, and his heart-rate rose, which all are physiological symptoms of suspense. The player experienced narrowed attentional focus, a state referred occurring during suspenseful experiences (Reich and Vorderer, 2015).

To better understand the subjective gameplay experience eliciting suspense in E1e9 and the motives for the decision of the choices matter situation, another layer to the qualitative textual analysis should added. In chapter 5, it has been already discussed about both the player's earlier knowledge and the information acquired from the system. Both are formed from the intertwined concepts of schemas and assemblages as well as genre theories. In addition, concepts of empathy and sympathy are useful for discussion the subjective gameplay experience eliciting suspense. Empathy (Merriam-Webster, 2019a) is defined as *“the action of understanding, being aware of, being sensitive to, and vicariously experiencing the feelings, thoughts, and experience of another of either the past or present without having the feelings, thoughts, and experience fully communicated in an objectively explicit manner”*. Sympathy (Merriam-Webster, 2019b) is defined *“an affinity, association, or relationship between persons or things wherein whatever affects one similarly affects the other”* and *“the act or capacity of entering into or sharing the feelings or interests of another”*. In other words, while both are used for describing the person's capability to feel other person's emotions and experiences, empathy is an action of a more profound way. Next, schemas, assemblages, genre conventions, and empathy and sympathy, are discussed in the relation of the player's earlier knowledge and the information acquired from the system, from the point of view of E1e9. Although the event

escalated quickly towards system controlled and strictly time limited choices matter situation, the player had enough time to form the decision. Even though the final decision of who gets to live and who dies was ultimately done in the choices matter situation, and almost instantly, the foundation for that decision was done before hand and that had an influence on the subjective gameplay experience eliciting suspense. It is important to address that the decision to save Duck was formed bases on the player's previous knowledge, which was influenced by the information acquired during the events. The way Duck is represented in the previous events, both individually and by his family through conversations, created the player to feel empathy towards him. Moreover, the player cares what will happen to Duck, not only for the sake of the boy, but also because of how the well-being of that boy influences on the player character and to his primary objective, which is to keep Clementine save. Conversely, Shawn's representation guides the player, especially in the choices matter situation, to more easily sacrifice him, as the player merely feels sympathy towards him. In a general level, it could be argued that majority of people would agree that it is more justified to save a young boy, who has a full life ahead of him, than a grown man. All in all, the representation of the characters that mix with the genre and thematic conventions, created a schema, that the player acted on. As discussed earlier, the player had some hesitation over the decision, and that was merely because the player thought of saving them both. But were there other motives and reasons that lead to the decision in the choices matter situation, which was done by instinct according to the Walkthrough? Although saving a young boy would be justified in a real life, but how about in a zombie apocalypse of a game of *TWD:SI*? A more beneficial thing for the player would have been saving Shawn, who is a man full of strength to survive in these horrific situations, and potentially offer better assistance during the game. On top of that, he was the son of Hershel, who is the owner of the farm that could offer some protection from the zombies. On the other hand, Shawn was trapped under the vehicle, helplessly screaming for help. Maybe it was easier and more natural to save the boy? After all, Lee cares about children obviously, as he has Clementine under his protection. Questions aside without a clear and simple answer, the Walkthrough indicates, that the player had conversations with all the NPCs before the incident. According to the text of the Walkthrough, the player tried to be Lee and projected his own thoughts through Lee in the dialogues, e.g. based on the player's observations about what had occurred previously in the game. In other words, the player was in the Zone of Becoming (see chapter 4.5). During the (w)reading process, the player became Lee and acted based on

the player's previous knowledge and information acquired from the system. Although there was a limited set of choices to choose from in dialogues, they were versatile enough for the player to participate in meaningful interaction with other characters, resulting a desired outcome. For example, according the Walkthrough, the player chose to be honest: a tight relationship between Lee and Kenny was formed, when the player answered truthfully to Kenny's questions relating Clementine and Lee in dialogues, before the choices matter situation in E1e9. Vice versa, Kenny shared Lee his thoughts, and the player got more familiar with Kenny, his family, and his son, Duck. In the dialogues, Kenny told Lee that he had killed a zombie that threatened to kill his son, implying to the player that Kenny would do anything to protect his family. Kenny told also that his family is a "*tough punch*". This acquired information resulted a notion that Kenny, and his family, would be a good ally in a zombie apocalypse. Shawn, conversely, implied within the dialogue that he would never be able to kill a zombie reshaping the player's knowledge. The dialogues, thus, directly influence on the information acquired from the system and the player's earlier knowledge, by shaping various assemblages and schemas.

Episode 1, event #15

The second choices matter situation under scrutiny is E1e15. This choices matter situation differs crucially from other ones in *TWD:SI*, as this situation is foremost an emotional one, and less suspenseful. Even though subjective experience of suspense, and the related emotions, are now lowered compared to the previous event, there is still uncertainty. In the previous event, the group of Lee, Glenn, and Carley, had to fight their way against zombies to reach the door of the hotel room. The group knew that behind the locked door is someone still alive, but unaware of what is happening inside that room.

In E1e15, suspense is elicited in the dialogue, and in the decision of the choices matter situation, which the player is forced to do soon. The dialogue reveals that the woman inside is named Irene, and that she is bitten by a zombie, resulting that she will eventually die and transform into a zombie. She is reluctant to open the door. As the dialogue continues, it is revealed that Irene wants to kill herself. Glenn and Carley make their opinions clear through dialogue, as they are reluctant to let Irene to kill herself. Especially Glenn is reluctant to let Irene die, apparently because he has romantic feeling towards her. The dialogue escalates quickly to the point, where Lee, controlled by the player, needs to decide between two options: to help Irene to kill herself or not. If the player

decides not help Irene, the player needs to try to convince her through dialogue not to kill herself. If the player decides to respect her will, the player needs to convince Glenn and Carley to let Irene to kill herself and to hand over the gun for her to do it. The uncertainty of the outcome results suspense, not only for how the gameplay continues after the decision, but also how it will influence on the characters of the game. If Lee gives the gun to Irene, the woman that he has just met, potentially could lead to a dangerous situation, and eliciting both fear of jeopardizing the player character's well-being and hope of not threaten the life of Lee. In the dialogue, when the player needs to do choices matter situation, the system forces the player to press the button of the controller informed in the screen. According to the Walkthrough, Lee, controlled by the player, convinced Glenn and Carley to allow Irene to kill herself and the uncertainty of the outcome resulted *empathetic suspense* towards Irene. Cut scene shows that Lee stays for the time as she takes her own life, and to get the gun back.

The choices matter situation of E1e15 differs crucially from other ones in *TWD:SI*, as this situation is foremost an emotional one, and less suspenseful. The findings indicate that this event elicit foremost *empathetic suspense*, and the possibility of eliciting *competitive suspense* as well which are associated normally occurring in the action sequences. This is because the dialogues function similar way and can elicit *competitive suspense*: convincing to let Irene to kill herself or not is constituted of the elements of rules and restrictions of the system, and the subjective participation of the player influence on the uncertain outcome. The difference here is that the outcome is reached through dialogue and not through action sequence. There is the lack of time limit in this event, but that merely influences on the lack of *anticipation of a startle*. In the Walkthrough, the decision in the choices matter situation was not hard, and after some consideration the choice of the player was to give Irene the gun. Firstly, the player did not see Irene as a threat, but merely a woman that had given up, and wanted to die. The player did not experience any danger or fear towards the player character's well-being when Lee gave the gun to Irene. Secondly, because Irene was someone the player has just met, the player only felt sympathy towards her. Glenn was attracted to her, or at least the player got that impression, but the player felt merely sympathy towards both Irene and Glenn, because neither one of them was introduced to the player properly during the gameplay. It can be deduced, that for making the choices matter decision more meaningful, and thus eliciting more suspense, the player should feel empathy, as well. For example, if the same situation

would have happened to Kenny, Katjaa or Duck, the decision would have been far more suspenseful and meaningful for the player.

Episode 1, event #19

Next event under analysis is E1e19, which is a suspenseful continuum to the previous event of E1e18. In E1e19, action intensifies and becomes extremely suspenseful instantly. Every situation of this event occurs in a fast-paced sequence, resulting the player has only a little time to react, and the player needs to act by his first instincts. In this event, both empathetic and *competitive suspense* are intertwined, and it is difficult to separate them from each other. The uncertainty of the event elicits both fear and hope, not only on the behalf of the player character, Lee, but also on the main objective: to keep Clementine safe. In addition, short-term goals, i.e. goals occurring within events, as mentioned in the Walkthrough, elicit suspenseful. The challenge is created when the player, controlling Lee, accompanied by the members of the group of survivors, needs to keep the zombies away in an action sequence by pressing the correct button of the controller at the right spot for enabling the group to escape the pharmacy while keeping Clementine safe. The combination of short-term goals of the event and the main objective at being jeopardy in a time limited and hostile environment elicits *competitive suspense*, which overlaps with *empathetic suspense* and *anticipation of the startle*.

E1e19 escalates quickly to the point where the choices matter decision is to be made. In a time-limited situation, the system forces the player to control Lee and to decide which one to save from the certain death of the zombie attack: Carley or Doug. This selection is done by navigating the controller towards the desired person and pressing the button indicated on the screen. According to the Walkthrough, the player chose to save Carley. The decision elicited both hope of saving at least one of the characters being attacked and fear of having too little time to save neither of them. This is because the player should know by now, based on the information acquired from the previous events combined to the player's earlier knowledge, that saving both of NPCs is not an option. In other words, suspense is elicited in the player's knowing of the inevitable death of the character not being saved, and the combination of fear and hope of saving the other, and the uncertainty of the outcome of the choices matter decision that he is about to make. By the Walkthrough, the decision of the player of which character to save was done by rational thinking, even though there was a limited time to react at that moment, meaning that the

choice was done earlier during the gameplay. The rationalization of such a choice begun when Lee had the first dialogues and conversations with the NPCs. Based on these and observations made during gameplay, the player acquired information about the NPCs, and the game world in general. In the Zone of Becoming and during the (w)reading process, the player acquired information that increased and shaped the knowledge of the player including various assemblages and schemas. For example, on the one hand, Carley is good with guns and knows how to take care of herself. In fact, she has a gun, which might turn useful in the future events. On the other hand, she lacks the technical skills, which Doug obviously has. However, Doug is represented as an archetype of horror genre: a person, who is going to be killed at some point of the story. In other words, based on the player's earlier knowledge Doug's archetype was recognized, and the information acquired from both Doug and Carley shaped further the player's knowledge. On top of these things, the player cannot ignore the implications made in the earlier events – which were affirmed in the following events and episodes – about the possibility of a romance between Lee and Carley. The hope of the uncertain romance had an influence on the player's decision, as well, as the player wanted to see how their relationship will evolve later in the game. However, Carley knew that Lee is a convicted criminal, which was revealed in the dialogue in one of the previous events. Yet, this did not influence on the player's decision, because the player did not remember or ignored this detail when he was playing. Acknowledging this would have had influence on the meaningful gameplay experience eliciting suspense in the choices matter situation, as letting Carley die would have resulted that the unpleasant information about Lee would have died with Carley. Currently, this was the knowledge of the player that was acquired from the system, although the future events would inform the player that Lee's past is known by other NPCs, as well. From the text of the Walkthrough it can be deduced, that overall all the information acquired during the gameplay, starting from the beginning of the game, combined with the earlier knowledge of the player, not only led the player to rank the NPCs, which influenced on, e.g. whose side to take in arguments in the dialogues, but also made the player to anticipate certain situations to occur, such as the decision of saving one over another. The questions of which were asked by the player during the gameplay, and which were answered in the fast-paced choices matter situations included, for example: Who to save if the situation would escalate on choosing one over another? Or who would be the most valuable in the future of the game? The latter question links directly on eliciting *competitive suspense*, whereas the first question elicits *empathetic*

suspense. After the choices matter decision of E1e19, the rest of the group manages to escape from the pharmacy, except Lee, who is the last one to get out. As zombies are approaching, the player is in control to navigate Lee to escape. When the player navigates Lee towards the exit, suddenly Larry knocks Lee out, leaving him at the mercy of the zombies. Now the player becomes a *helpless spectator*, and simultaneously loses control over current short-term goal (fight and escape the zombies), which elicits *empathetic suspense* towards Lee, while eliminating *competitive suspense*. While hearing Clementine screaming after Lee, the helplessness influences on the main objective of keeping Clementine save, eliciting *empathetic suspense* towards Clementine, as well. The helplessness of the player, combined with the uncertainty of the outcome of the event, elicit suspense at its peak, but it is quickly relieved as the helping hand of Kenny appears, and Lee is rescued.

The gameplay situation of E1e19 occurs in a strict time limit, combining *competitive suspense*, *empathetic suspense* and an anticipation of a startle, as well as momentarily turning player into a *helpless spectator*. The player has only little time to react in the changing situations and the decisions are done primarily on first instinct: at least, if the player has not been able to predict the possibility of situations of the event occurring at some point of the game. Suspense is also elicited by the gameplay limitations. For example, navigation is not up to the fast-paced action of the event. The navigation is slow at times, and occasionally the correct area in the interface where to press the correct button of the controller is relatively small and the player struggles to find the correct area. This kind of suspense is a prime example of *unintended system elicited suspense*, where suspense is elicited because of the design problems of the game. This type of suspense is one of the new findings of the qualitative textual analysis.

Episode 2, event #1

E2e1 is the opening event of episode 2 and begins with an introductory cut scene, which resembles intros of tv-shows. In the cut scene, Lee and Mark, NPC introduced now for the first time in the game, are on a hunting trip for food. When the player is merely a *helpless spectator*, off-screen is someone screaming and the conversation between Lee and Mark reveals that they think its Kenny, eliciting *empathetic suspense* towards him. The cut scene continues, and they find a man named David, who is trapped in a bear trap, and two teenagers, Ben and Travis, around him frightened. After that Kenny appears in

the event diminishing *empathetic suspense* towards him. Even though eliciting *empathetic suspense* towards the newly introduced David, the situation differs on how *empathetic suspense* was experienced earlier. According to the Walkthrough, the player felt relieved that the man screaming was not Kenny. After this, the player is no longer a *helpless spectator*, as the cut scene ends, and now the player faces choices matter decision and has an option to participate by controlling Lee. The event turns into a time limited situation, although time limit is not clearly indicated, and the system forces the player to choose to cut off David's leg, or not, while several zombies start to appear from the woods. According to the Walkthrough, the player chooses to cut the leg with an axe by pressing the correct button of the controller, thus, eliciting *competitive suspense*. After the decision, mixing both *empathetic suspense* towards the well-being of the player character and the NPCs and *competitive suspense* in a restricted situation, the experience of suspense intensifies. When the player is rabidly pushing the A-button, Lee cuts the leg of David while the zombies are approaching, and the player cannot do anything else but to continue or discontinue cutting, as the system limits any other action also eliciting *anticipation of the startle*. As the player proceeds to control Lee to cut the leg, this interaction suddenly stops as the system turns player into a *helpless spectator* and eliminates the *competitive suspense*. One of the two kids, Travis, gets attacked by a zombie, while other characters watch helplessly. This elicit *empathetic suspense* on the rest of the group and mixes fear, hope and uncertainty of their survival. The cut scene continues showing that now one-legged David is relieved from the bear trap. The event ends as the group of Lee, Mark, Kenny, David and Ben escapes, while Travis gets killed by zombies.

The thing that makes E2e1 difficult to analyse, is the fact that the well-being of David is directly linked on the succeeding a competitive situation, which elicit fear, hope and uncertainty, and furthermore, *competitive suspense* is intertwined with *empathetic suspense*. This results questions, such as: Does the player really experience empathy on David? Or is the *competitive suspense* too dominant for the player to experience *empathetic suspense*, at least the way presented earlier? One possible answer is that when the player chose to participate in action in the choices matter situation by cutting the leg of David, who was unfamiliar for Lee, the situation foremost elicited *competitive suspense* at the beginning. According to Walkthrough, the player experienced sympathy for David, but did not experience any empathy, at first. The reason for this was because

seeing David trapped did not elicit any fear nor hope of survival of David, only uncertainty. However, when the situation continued, empathy was elicited also towards David. This is because the player gained control and most importantly chose to actively participate in action to save David, which elicited *competitive suspense*, as well. This in turn elicited the mixture of fear, hope, and uncertainty, both for the competitive success of the player, and of David's survival, and thus eliciting stronger *empathetic suspense* towards David. It is safe to say that the player experienced *empathetic suspense* over the player character at least, as the threat of the zombies was present. But did the player experience it towards David also? Would it be easier to analyse this event if, e.g. Clementine or Duck, would be in place instead of unfamiliar David. The simple answer would be, that *empathetic suspense* would elicit automatically, as the player would experience empathy towards Clementine or Duck to begin with. Towards Clementine, because the player character is taking care of her well-being, and towards Duck, because the player character has helped him and his family during the gameplay. In other words, the player probably feels more empathy than merely sympathy towards Clementine and Duck. However, a closer inspection might prove otherwise. If the case of Clementine is scrutinized the same way as the case of David, there are similarities found. Regarding the *competitive suspense*, the system presents the situations where Clementine's well-being is under jeopardy mainly over competitive situations, where fear, hope and uncertainty is elicited directly from these competitive situations. Sure, the *empathetic suspense* is elicited, but is it because of or regardless of *competitive suspense*? It is safe to say, that both these suspense types are linked, but the influence of both is a difficult thing to analyse. However, it can be deduced that empathy and sympathy are key for analysing suspense. Considering the participatory nature of games, *competitive suspense* is naturally more dominant type of suspense. Nonetheless, other types of suspense can intensify the experience of suspense, especially in story-driven games. Furthermore, the experience of the player is the key to determine the intensity of suspense, and why and how the suspense is elicited. It is noteworthy, that *empathetic suspense* can be elicited without the *competitive suspense* also, but this is the case when there is only a cut scene occurring, where the helplessness of the player is a key factor. All in all, E2e1 raises a hypothesis of how, and why sympathy and empathy influence on eliciting both *empathetic suspense* and *competitive suspense*, but as the discussion presented here indicates, the issue needs to be further studied for better understand the issue.

Episode 2, event #7

Next event under inspection occurs after Lee agrees to go on an exploration to find bandits with Danny, a suspicious man who lives in a farm nearby with his brother and his mother. Suspense is elicited by being a *helpless spectator* during the cut scene, when Lee and Danny search the bandits' camp. After the cut scene, they find the camp and E2e7 begins. Two types of suspense are elicited when the system gives a direct command to the player to search the camp and the player has no choice but to follow the command to continue playing. These restrictions of the system and by limiting player's action create a multilayered suspenseful situation by eliciting *empathetic suspense* towards Lee, and anticipation to a startle even though there is no time limit and the player is in total control of the pace. The way of eliciting *anticipation of the startle* in this situation is different than discussed by Van Vught and Schott (2012), who theorized that this type of suspense elicited in a gameplay situation, where the system is in control by triggering an anticipated startling effect within the time limit, which eventually startles the player. In the situation of E2e7, although the system is also in strict control and the player is forced to act eventually leading to a startle, the player is in control of triggering the startle effect by controlling Lee. The way the system restricts the player character's behavior when the player character is crouching and moving closely to the short-term goal, and because limiting the view on the screen for the player to see surroundings properly, are the main reasons for eliciting *anticipation of the startle*. When the player has navigated slowly advancing Lee to the camp the player character's behavior changes as Lee stands up and a better view of the surroundings is provided. Now the player is free, by controlling Lee, to investigate the camp site and suspense is lowered as anticipation to a startle disappears. When the player navigates and interacts with the surroundings, the system uses several techniques which triggers different types of suspense: *empathetic suspense*, *anticipation of the startle*, and *helpless spectator*. Even though the player is in control of the player character most of the time in the event, the difference is in how restricted the navigating is in different situations of the event. Firstly, while in the camp site, the navigating is less restricted compared to the situation when Lee was advancing towards the camp site. At the camp site, Lee can be navigated in an unlinear fashion, whereas while advancing towards the camp the player is forced to navigate in a strictly linear, predetermined route. Although the whole event is suspenseful the player freedom for dictating the pace of the player character has an influence on the gameplay experience, and thus the player can

also try to control the gameplay experience of suspense. Secondly, Lee and Danny are the only characters at the camp site. On top of the dialogue of the choices matter situation occurring later in the event they have multiple conversations and Lee makes notions which are triggered when the player interacts with the environment. The differences of dialogues, conversations, and notions were discussed at the beginning of this chapter, and all of them have different variations of player freedom and the control of the system. For example, when Lee is searching inside a tent in E2e7 it is shown in the screen that there are two sleeping bags: one adult size and one kid size. This vision triggers Lee to make notions which results that the player notices those things and raises questions and uncertainty. In the Walkthrough, this elicited uncertainty of who has been sleeping in the tent and questions followed: is there a kid somewhere and where are the bandits? In addition, the system controls the conversations between Lee and Danny which are triggered when the player controls Lee to examine the environment. When these conversations occur the player becomes instantly, but only momentarily, a *helpless spectator*. In E2e7, the conversations are e.g. about a camera. When the player controls Lee to examine the camera Danny instantly becomes curious of Lee's action and begins a cautious conversation. In the Walkthrough, this raised questions such as: Is Danny hiding something and does Danny know something that he is not revealing? When the player is a *helpless spectator*, Lee indicates that the camera is empty and Danny replies "good" – but why is it a good thing? Is Danny not curious what is inside the camera? Unless he already knows what is inside? Probably the camera has been used for something that is not appropriate for Lee to see. Several questions increase uncertainty, and thus elicits suspense that influence on the event occurring as well as on the future events. Furthermore, the events that have occurred previously in The Walking Dead universe that are unknown for Lee elicit uncertainty for the player. Both the notions and the conversations raise questions and uncertainty, and directly influence on a longer period suspense: suspense that continues from event to another. For example, the suspicious behavior of Danny (and his brother and his mother) have continued throughout the time Lee have known him and this event increases uncertainty towards them, as well as fear of that they are evil. In the intersection of different assemblages, schemas, and genre conventions, i.e. in the mixture of 'the player's earlier knowledge' and 'the information acquired from the system' during this and the previous events, the player can deduce that something surprising or even startling is going to happen soon eliciting *anticipation of the startle*. Furthermore, *empathetic suspense* is elicited as all of this is influencing

directly on the player character. When Lee continues investigating the camp site and the player navigates Lee back to the tent several types of suspense are elicited both sequentially and intertwined. When Lee, controlled by the player, examines the tent he finds a bloody bunny and next to it is something covered. This moment is a genre convention which familiarity is dependable on ‘the player’s earlier knowledge’. In the Walkthrough, this elicited *anticipation of the startle* and *empathetic suspense* when the player both feared that there was a dead child covered and hoped that there is not. In the cut scene it is shown that Lee pulls the cover and it is revealed that underneath is Clementine’s cap which disappeared in the event previously occurred, and thus increases uncertainty of how the cap ended in the tent. The system reminds the player both the vulnerability of Clementine and the main objective of the game of keeping Clementine save. Being a *helpless spectator*, this situation elicits *empathetic suspense* towards Clementine. Almost instantly, though, when the player is still a *helpless spectator*, the cut scene shows a woman appearing at the camp site. She yells at Danny and have him at her crosshair with her crossbow while Danny is pointing his gun at her. Now, as Lee is out of the tent, he is under a threat too, eliciting *empathetic suspense* as well as *anticipation of the action sequence* based on the mixture of ‘the player’s earlier knowledge’ and ‘the information acquired from the system’. The player gains little control when the dialogue begins. The woman and Danny are arguing and the player, controlling Lee, can participate through dialogue that is strictly time limited. Because of the time limit and because the woman and Danny are arguing, Lee does not really get any answers. The situation elicits not only *empathetic suspense* towards Lee and Clementine as the player character is under direct threat and the main objective of keeping Clementine safe is uncertain, but also *competitive suspense* as the player has an option to influence on the outcome through dialogue. The player soon faces choices matter decision. The system gives the player options through dialogue to choose from: to shoot the woman, to tell Danny to shoot her, or ask questions. According to the Walkthrough, because of all the uncertainty and questions, the player chose to ask more questions. This was done despite of fear of Lee’s well-being, because the lack of information resulted the player was anxious to get some answers. The player also hoped for a peaceful resolution and hoped the woman would survive. When the player chose to ask how the woman got Clementine’s cap she did not reply in a rational way. Instead, she began blaming and making accusations. At this point, the event is at its highest peak by eliciting hope, fear, and uncertainty, as well as four types of suspense: *empathetic suspense*, *competitive suspense*, *anticipation of the startle*

and soon *helpless spectator*. Situation escalates quickly in the dialogue and while the woman makes more accusations suddenly Danny shoots her. As the player is once again a *helpless spectator* Lee replies shocked: “You murdered her.” Danny, on the other hand, is not shocked about his decision. In fact, he is suspiciously calm. At this point, it is certain for the player that Danny killed the woman for a reason that is more than merely the fact that Danny was under threat of dying. Acknowledging this increases uncertainty of the player and raises more questions that influence on the well-being of Lee, Clementine, and NPCs, as well as elicits *empathetic suspense*. This suspense will last until the truth is revealed later in the game. At this event, ‘the player’s earlier knowledge’ and ‘information acquired from the system’ are vital for the meaningful gameplay experience eliciting suspense and further influencing on the player’s behavior during gameplay. Above is the description of the reasons and result of the player’s subjective gameplay experience according to the Walkthrough. It is noteworthy that the experience varies from player to another and different player with different knowledge and capability of acquiring information would have had a different subjective gameplay experience, and thus a different experience of suspense.

Episode 2, event #10

E2e10 begins when the group, consisting Lee, Clementine, Kenny, Larry, and Lilly, is locked inside a room inside the barn by Danny and Andrew. At the same time, rest of the Kenny’s family, Katjaa, and Duck, are held as hostages by Danny and Andrew resulting *empathetic suspense* towards both the group locked in, and the hostages, as well. Player is in control of navigating Lee in a restricted space of the locked room and the only way to advance is to begin a dialogue with other members of the group as the system limits the options of interaction. When Lee begins the dialogue with Larry things get tense rather quickly: Larry gets agitated and has a heart attack. This instantly elicits many types of suspense which are discussed next. The exact moment of Larry’s heart attack elicits both *empathetic suspense* and the possibility of *competitive suspense* when the player begins to anticipate an action sequence. It is noteworthy, that *empathetic suspense* is higher towards to rest of the group’s well-being than Larry’s and especially towards Lee and Clementine as the protection of her is the main objective of the game. After Larry’s heart-attack, Kenny instantly insist that they should kill Larry to prevent him turning into a zombie. Obviously, Lilly wants to save her dad and starts the resuscitation. Now the player, by controlling Lee, is forced by the system to do big choices matter decision within

a time limit eliciting *competitive suspense*. The player has two options: to team up with Kenny to kill Larry or to help Lilly to try saving Larry's life. The decision is made by pressing the appropriate button of the controller indicated by the system. In the Walkthrough, the player chose to help Lilly. The cut scene shows that Kenny is stunned by Lee's decision. As the cut scene continues, and while Lee resuscitates Larry, Kenny picks up a big block of salt lick nearby and throws it at Larry's head smashing it to pieces. All the characters of the event are shocked, but all differently, which can be deduced by their facial expressions.

All in all, the choices matter situation of E2e10 is an extremely suspenseful moment and happens quickly eliciting various types of suspense sequentially and intertwined: *empathetic suspense*, *competitive suspense*, *helpless spectator*, and *anticipation of the startle*, as well as *anticipation of the action sequence*. The motivations of the player for the decision to attempt to save Larry were mainly because of the reaction of Clementine in the situation and the possible reaction afterwards, especially if Lee would be in any part of killing Larry, a man who is not even dead yet. In other words, the primary objective of Clementine's well-being and keeping her safe influenced greatly on the player's decision. This decision was done even if Larry would probably not have done the same for Lee remembering that Larry was the one who knocked Lee down in the E1e19 resulting that Lee almost lost his life. All in all, Clementine's well-being was far greater than the well-being of Lee's and it can be deduced that the *empathetic suspense* was greater towards Clementine than the player character in this event.

E2e10 differs from others, as the player is in control and there is no time limit after the choices matter decision when the event continues. The player is in control of navigating Lee and can interact with the surroundings. The remaining characters are at the same room after the incident of killing Larry, and thus are not able to escape the situation. This results multiple questions and elicits uncertainty: How will the situation go on from this? How can they act as a group after this? How this changes the relationship between Kenny and Lee? Or Lee and Lilly? How about Lilly and Kenny? How will this affect Clementine who was forced to see something like that and who's well-being is Lee's primary objective? How will this influence on Lee's position on the group? After all, Larry was an antagonist for Lee who knew Lee's secret. The death of Larry, thus, influences on the longer period suspense of the revelation of Lee's secret.

Episode 3, event #3

In E3e3, Lee and Kenny are scavenging, and they see a woman surrounded by zombies in the streets at the distance. Kenny is trying to persuade Lee to leave the woman alone and let the zombies kill her as they should not interfere, and he does not want to attract the zombies' attention towards them. Lee, on the other hand, cannot let the woman die helplessly. While Lee and Kenny have a conversation, in which the player cannot participate, the player needs to do choices matter decision which is not clearly indicated during the event. Looking through the scope of the rifle, the player has an option to aim and shoot the rifle or not. The text of the Walkthrough indicates that the player looked through the scope quickly to see if there would be a way to save the woman somehow. As the zombies came nearer the woman the player not only felt fear, and hope of the uncertain outcome, but also *empathetic suspense* towards the trapped woman and *competitive suspense* as the player needs to aim and shoot within a time limit which is not clearly indicated. When the player saw the nearest zombie about to catch the woman the player instantly tried to shoot the zombie by pressing the correct button hoping that the possible outcome would be to save her. The outcome was surprising: Lee shot the woman. As this was done completely accidentally the subjective gameplay experience elicited a new type of suspense which is named as *unintended player elicited suspense*. This differs from *unintended system elicited suspense*, as discussed in E1e19, where suspense is unintentionally elicited from the system and not because of the player's action. After the choices matter situation, the player turns instantly into a *helpless spectator*. The cut scene shows Lee and Kenny escaping the zombies and the hope and fear of uncertain outcome turns towards the well-being of Lee and Kenny eliciting *empathetic suspense*.

The choices matter decision of E3e3 elicits fear in two ways. Firstly, the fear of the possible death of the unknown woman, as the player feels sympathy towards the woman. This differs from empathy because in this event the woman is unknown, and thus not familiar with Lee and the player does not feel attachment to her. Secondly, the fear of how the decision influences on the relationship of Lee and Kenny is elicited which in turn might have an effect in the future events. This has an influence on the longer period suspense, as well. Vice versa, hope is elicited in two ways. Firstly, the hope of saving the woman, and secondly, the hope of the outcome positively influencing in the future events and the longer period suspense. However, by shooting the woman unintentionally the whole situation changed instantly eliciting uncertainty. In the Walkthrough, the player

immediately began to think questions such as: What went wrong and why this happened? As the player clearly did not mean to shoot the woman, this resulted that he was completely uncertain what will happen next and ‘the player’s earlier knowledge’ and ‘the information acquired from the system’ were conflicted. The hope of saving the woman instantly changed to the fear of the possible outcome which was the death of the woman. Still being uncertain and while several questions arise the player turns instantly into a *helpless spectator* as the cut scene begins. It shows Lee and Kenny escaping the zombies and the hope, and fear of uncertain outcome turns towards the *empathetic suspense* of the well-being of Lee and Kenny.

Episode 3, event #11

Next event under inspection follows a highly suspenseful event 10 of episode 3, in which the group managed to escape the bandits and the swarming zombies who both attacked them simultaneously at the hotel. E3e11 begins with the cut scene where the group, now consisting of Lee, Clementine, Kenny, Katjaa, Duck, Lilly, Carley, and Ben, are escaping with the RV (recreational vehicle). Kenny is driving, while Katjaa and Duck are beside him, and the rest of the group are at the back of the RV. The previous events fresh in mind, Lilly begins her accusations about the stolen items at the camp which ultimately led to the attack by bandits, and she blames Carley and Ben. Once again, controlled by the player, Lee is in the middle of an argument which he can take part through the time limited dialogue. As the situation quickly intensifies, the fear, and hope of the uncertain outcome are mixed. Suddenly, in the middle of an argument, a suspenseful cut scene begins where it is shown that the RV hits a zombie in the middle of a road which quickly forces Kenny to stop the vehicle at the side of the road. The group disembark from the RV but the concern over the zombie accident turns quickly again to the argument between Lilly, and Carley, and Ben, where Lee acts as a middle man once more. Through an intense dialogue, where the player has a limited time to participate, things quickly escalate and the player becomes a *helpless spectator*. A cut scene shows Carley to yell at Lilly, ultimately resulting Lilly to shoot Carley in the head. Everybody is in shock, including Lee, which is shown by the look on the faces of the characters. A highly suspenseful cut scene continues as Lee quickly catches Lilly’s hands and pushes her on the side of the RV. Lilly is shocked too, not because of Lee’s reaction apparently, but because she shot a human being. Kenny yells that the rest of the group should leave Lilly behind and now Lee, controlled by the player, needs to make choices matter decision. Lee needs to decide

between two options: to leave Lilly behind at her own in the middle of nowhere or to take her with the rest of the group.

In the Walkthrough, the choices matter decision of E3e11 was to take Lilly with the rest of the group, which is opposed by Kenny, but ultimately Lee's decision is how things are going to be. According to the Walkthrough, the event leading to the choices matter situation was suspenseful. In addition, the dialogue was time limited, although the player had enough time to acquire information to objectively analyze the choices matter situation in expense of the subjective experience. The player's decision was done mainly because he was curious to see how things evolve and from the objective point of view. Normally, according to the Walkthrough, the player would have left Lilly behind on her own because she shot Carley: a person who both had romantic feelings towards Lee and were clearly a target of Lee's romantic feelings. However, this relationship was solely the fabrication of the system and the player's role in this was being a merely spectator. The lack of subjectivity at the expense of objectivity resulted that *empathetic suspense* was not elicited. From this it can be deduced that the subjectivity of the player is crucial for meaningful gameplay experience and eliciting suspense.

Episode 4, event #5

E4e5 begins with the cut scene from the perspective of the player character which shows that Kenny is in the attic on his knees on the floor. When Lee approaches Kenny from behind the player is merely in control to begin a dialogue with Kenny. In the Walkthrough, after participating in the dialogue the player selected to ask Kenny what he is doing. Simultaneously, it is shown that there is a boy who has turned into a zombie. As the dialogue between Lee and Kenny continues, they eventually conclude that the boy has probably starved to death resulting him turning into a zombie. Kenny continues the dialogue by saying the boy looks like Duck, Kenny's son, who he lost along with his wife in the previous episode. The player faces choices matter situation and has two options to choose from: whether to kill the zombie boy by himself or to encourage Kenny to do that. When these options are presented in the dialogue *empathetic suspense* is elicited. The player chose to encourage Kenny to put the zombie boy out of its misery. According to Walkthrough, the player's motivation was to help Kenny to get some consolation over the loss of his own son and family and if not get getting a closure on the loss then at least for the healing process to begin. The cut scene shows Kenny to shoot the zombie boy.

Kenny says that they should bury the boy and controlling the player character only through dialogue the player chose an option where Lee promises to bury the boy. Soon after, a cut scene shows Lee carrying the boy out of the attic.

E4e5 differs from other events under inspection for a couple of reasons. Firstly, this event does not include similar choices matter situation, compared to other situations. In this event, the choices matter decision is about killing and about who will perform this act: the player character or the NPC. In other events the choices matter decisions are about saving a character in expense of another. Secondly, this event differs from other events of the qualitative textual analysis conducted here because this event is not really a suspenseful event but more of an emotional event that eventually results to a resolution of suspense. This event is slow-paced which is underlined by the time limitless dialogue. The event enables the player to stop and think of the actions previously done and what to do from now on. According to the Walkthrough, this resulted experiences of different kind of emotions and feelings to occur for the player on top of suspense which were mainly sadness and compassion.

Episode 4, event #33

The suspenseful situation that began in the previous event continues in the E4e33. Previously, the zombies attacked and killed one of the group members eliciting *empathetic suspense* towards both the player character, and Clementine, whose well-being is the primary objective of the game, as well as the rest of the group consisting of NPCs. Eventually, the group were able to escape through a door and now the cut scene shows they end up at the bell tower. At this point the player is merely a *helpless spectator*. The cut scene continues and shows that Lee cannot shut the door and the group needs to go downstairs to continue escaping the zombies. At the floor level, as the cut scene continues, the situation elicits not only *anticipation of the startle* when Lee is about to open the door, but also mixes fear, hope, and uncertainty of what is behind the door. The suspense heightens when it is revealed that there are zombies behind the door, which is now open, simultaneously startling the player. At the same time, Kenny finds a shotgun, throws it to Lee, and within a few seconds the player is in control which instantly elicits *competitive suspense*. Now, although able to participate in the action, the system restricts the player to navigate Lee to go back upstairs. Simultaneously, the player needs to aim and shoot the approaching zombies. According the text of the Walkthrough, after a while

in the middle of climbing the stairs during the action sequence, Lee's leg goes through the stairs. Now, because of the system's restrictions the player's navigation is limited, and Lee cannot be moved. As the situation intensifies the player needs to press different buttons in order to pull out Lee's leg up and while doing that the player has to continue shooting the approaching zombies. This action sequence combines *competitive suspense* and *empathetic suspense* at its peak, and all of this is underlined by the limitation of time, as well as a strict situation that is controlled and limited by the system. After pressing the correct buttons Lee manages to release his foot. Even though the player is again in control of the navigation the system still restricts the navigation in a predefined path and the only option for the player is to navigate Lee to continue climbing up the stairs. While doing this, zombies appears in Lee's path and the player turns momentarily into a *helpless spectator*. However, almost immediately a shot is fired from upstairs killing one zombie nearby and it is indicated that the shot was taken by Christa. After that, the player again gains control and now Lee, who is out of ammunition, takes out his axe and the action sequence eliciting *competitive suspense* continues where the player has to control Lee to kill all the zombies out of his way. After reaching upstairs, the player turns once more into a *helpless spectator* and the cut scene shows that the rest of the group continues to escape through the ladders outside and their destination is back to the sewers. Suddenly, Ben is gripped by a zombie. He stumbles and falls but in a nick of time Lee reaches his hand and gets a grip on Ben preventing him falling into a certain death. When Lee is holding Ben with one hand preventing him to drop the player is forced by the system to participate in a dialogue with Ben in which he needs to make the choices matter decision: to drop Ben or to save him. Ben encourages Lee to let go and drop him by making justifications for this action while Kenny participates in the dialogue by agreeing Ben. Ben also says that there is no time which implies directly to the time limit which in turn elicit suspense. However, the Walkthrough does not indicate is there in fact a time limit in the choices matter situation. Even though there was not really a time limit 'the information acquired from the system' through dialogue implying otherwise influenced on the player's subjective experience of suspense. Ben's argumentation in the dialogue led the player to believe in the limitation of time which hurried the decision. This resulted that the player felt the situation more suspenseful which would have not been the case if the player would have noticed the absence of time limit and acted upon this information. At the choices matter situation the player not only controls the fate of Ben, but also is in control of the resolution of the problematic relationship between Ben and other characters,

including the player character. In the Walkthrough, the decision was to save Ben and a cut scene shows Lee pulling Ben up and the whole group manages to escape.

E4e33, which peaks at the choices matter situation, is not as straight-forward to analyze compared to majority of the events selected in the qualitative textual analysis. Firstly, the choices matter decision has a direct influence on both the main objective and short-term goals. In addition, it influences on both the short-term and long-term suspense, as well. Short term goal of completing the event overlaps with all the suspense types which occur sequentially and intertwined, and influence on the meaningful gameplay experience. Secondly, considering the long-term suspense this event is a bit more complicated for analyzing. ‘The information acquired’ in the previous events and in the event occurring, combined with ‘the player’s earlier knowledge’, including e.g. various assemblages, schemas, and genre conventions, intertwines with various types of suspense during the meaningful gameplay experience e.g. *empathetic suspense* is elicited toward multiple characters which also overlaps with *competitive suspense*. For example, Kenny’s reaction to let Ben die is understandable, as he blames Ben for the loss of his family and Kenny has made it clear in the previous events that the group should get rid of Ben at some point. Kenny’s participation in the dialogue has a direct influence on both *empathetic suspense*, and *competitive suspense* of the dialogue, reminding the player to consider other characters of the game and how the decision affects not only them, but also the relationship between Lee and other characters. During the gameplay experience it has become evident that the decision of saving or letting Ben to die will have consequences that are uncertain during the event, as well as elicit various fears and hopes for the player. This is underlined in the dialogue when Ben says that instead of saving him Lee should go and make sure Clementine’s safe which instantly elicits *empathetic suspense* towards Clementine. When considering that protecting Clementine is the primary objective of the game this elicits *competitive suspense* as well. All in all, E4e33 is one of the most suspenseful events of *TWD:SI*. Firstly, all ‘the player’s earlier knowledge’ and ‘information acquired from the system’ has a direct influence on the gameplay experience and eliciting suspense. Secondly, the event combines not only all types of suspense both sequentially, and intertwined, but also short-term goals and the main objective which results in the event being extremely suspenseful.

On a side note, according to the Walkthrough during the first time of playing this event Lee got killed by the last zombie in the action sequence. In that occasion, the player

pressed the correct button to kill the zombie but probably the system did not receive the command in time and Lee got killed. This broke the boundaries of the game diegesis by presenting an option for continue playing. The player instantly restarted playing the event and the event continued at the same point where he needed to kill the same zombies to get upstairs. The second time of playing was less intensive probably because the player knew that it does not matter if Lee gets killed or not and the player could continue playing again from the same point. However, the uncertainty of the following events was still present but nonetheless the intensity of the situation weakened.

Episode 5, events #13 and #14

Before analysing the choices matter situations of episode five, there are two things that needs to be addressed. The events occurred from episodes one to four have influenced on the meaningful gameplay experience by altering the main objective and the player character. Firstly, the main objective has changed from keeping Clementine safe to rescuing her from the kidnapper. Secondly, Lee has changed: he has been bitten by a zombie and he is slowly dying and eventually turning into a zombie. Both these aspects directly influence on the short-term goals and suspense types in various ways which are discussed next in the relation of the selected choices matter situations of episode five.

This section of the qualitative textual analysis differs compared to previous ones, as this combines two connected, yet different choices matter decisions which are separated in two different events: E5e13 and E5e14. E5e13 begins when Lee enters a room. The room is poorly lit and empty besides a dresser, two chairs, and a door that probably leads to a small bathroom or a wardrobe. The player is in control and free to navigate in the room. When the player navigates towards the mentioned door the cut scene is triggered and the player turns into a *helpless spectator*. The cut scene shows a man with a gun approaching Lee behind him which elicits both *empathetic suspense* towards Lee and *anticipation of the startle*. Player gains little control when the dialogue begins. The man commands Lee to hand over his stuff which is the first choices matter decision of these two events connected. The choices matter situation is different compared to other ones in this analysis, as this is not directly a matter of life or death. However, it is included in the analysis for its connection to the next event. Now, as the player is in control the decision is whether to obey the man and give up weapons or not. In the Walkthrough, the decision was to give up weapons. By choosing that option the player again turns into a *helpless*

spectator and the cut scene shows Lee to give up his weapons reluctantly to the man with a gun. According to the Walkthrough, seeing Lee's reluctance resulted mixed emotions to the player. The player's choice to give up weapons was done without reluctance because of the player knowing that Lee would not die because of that action (i.e. 'the player's earlier knowledge'). However, because of 'the information acquired from the system', i.e. seeing Lee's reluctance, triggered intense *empathetic suspense* towards Lee.

When the player is still merely a *helpless spectator*, E5e14 begins, and the cut scene shows the man and Lee to sit on two armchairs face-to-face. The man has a gun in his hand and a bowling bag on the floor beside his armchair. The player gains some control when the dialogue begins. The man begins by asking questions about Lee and the player is in control to participate or not. During the dialogue the story of the man is revealed. He tells Lee that he has lost his son, his wife, and his daughter. The man continues that he was the owner of the station wagon which Lee and the group apparently rob in E2e16. On a side note, Lee and his group was unaware that the station wagon belonged to anyone at the time but nevertheless their action was a cause to a chain of events in The Walking Dead universe which is now revealed by the man with a gun. He continues that he has heard the conversations the group have had through Clementine's walkie-talkie. In addition, Clementine has told the man information about Lee and the rest of the group. Based on 'the information acquired from the system' through the dialogue combined to 'the player's earlier knowledge' it should be obvious by now that the man talking is the kidnapper of Clementine. This revelation intertwines both *empathetic suspense* and *competitive suspense* by directly linking the situation to the short-term goal of surviving from this event, and to the main objective of saving Clementine from the kidnapper. The suspense is further heightened as the man tells Lee that he is going to revenge the pain he has suffered and making a direct threat towards the player character by saying he is going to hurt Lee, and *empathetic suspense* intertwines with Lee's well-being, as well. This situation also results in *anticipation of the startle* which differs from the one defined by Van Vught and Schott (2012). More specifically, the player began to anticipate the action sequence, which in turn will elicit *competitive suspense*, similarly as discussed in the previous choices matter situations. In this event, *anticipation of the action sequence* is elicited from a combination of both 'the information acquired from the system' (the man makes a direct threat towards Lee), and 'the player's earlier knowledge': this situation resembles a classic boss stage which is familiar from action games where the player needs

to beat the biggest opponent so far. In addition, throughout the dialogue it is revealed what has happened to the kidnapper. As the dialogue continues, various types of suspense are heightened, and the player has the power to control this by answering meaningfully. Vice versa, it can be deduced that if the player randomly answers the questions in the dialogue the result would be less suspenseful compared to actively participating in the dialogue. Furthermore, player's active participation is the key to elicit different types of suspense. The player is in the Zone of Becoming during the (w)reading process, where the story, and all the elements of the game are intertwined during the meaningful and subjective gameplay experience such as in the dialogue between Lee and the kidnapper. It is noteworthy, that it does not really matter what Lee answers in the dialogue with the kidnapper as he, nevertheless, tells his story which eventually leads to the point where Lee needs to do the choices matter decision. However, the way of how the player, by controlling Lee, reacts in the dialogue influences on eliciting suspense. It is uncertain how things will end and by actively participating in the dialogue the player has at least an option to influence on the subjective experience of suspense. Moreover, if the dialogue is considered as a way of persuading the opponent it can also be considered as a way of eliciting *competitive suspense*.

During the kidnapper's monologue the rope between two doors is loosen behind him and Lee (and the player) see Clementine approaching from the door. According to the Walkthrough, this instantly elicited *empathetic suspense* towards Clementine in expense of Lee. The reason for this is that now Clementine is not under captivity of the kidnapper but still under threat and the situation directly influences on the well-being of Clementine, and thus the main objective is jeopardized. Now Lee, controlled by the player, can interact with the surroundings by pressing the A button in a desired place of the screen eliciting *competitive suspense*, as well. In the Walkthrough, the player guided Lee by pressing the A-button on the bottle that was on the table to indicate Clementine to take the bottle and hopefully to hit the kidnapper with it. Now, as the player becomes a *helpless spectator*, *competitive suspense* is diminished. However, *empathetic suspense* towards Clementine is starting to heighten at its peak because the player has no control at the situation at present. Being a *helpless spectator*, the player cannot do anything but watch as Clementine takes the bottle and begins slowly walking towards the kidnapper with a gun. As Clementine walks, step by step, both *anticipation of the startle*, and *empathetic suspense* is heightened at its peak. The reason for this was because the well-being of

Clementine is the primary objective of the game and now that was in jeopardy. Moreover, the hope of succeeding was lesser than the fear of failing in an attempt of hitting the man unconscious which resulted an unpleasant uncertainty to occur for the player. The fear and hope combined to the uncertain outcome results that the player needs to be prepared for anything. In addition, there is not a similar, visible time limit that in the dialogues but the action about to occur is more and more evident in every step Clementine takes resulting in the player to *anticipate the action sequence* as well as *anticipation of the startle*. When Clementine is behind the kidnapper, she quickly hits him on the head with the bottle. Lee, now again controlled by the player, needs to attack the kidnapper by pressing the correct button in the correct spot. In the Walkthrough, the player controls Lee to attack the kidnapper as quickly as possible. Choosing this option resulted the anticipated action sequence to begin, instantly eliciting *competitive suspense*, which is now intertwined with *empathetic suspense* towards Clementine and Lee. In the action sequence the player needs to press both A- and Y-buttons at the right time to fight the kidnapper. This resulted in that the player pressed the buttons anxiously as the player had to follow the instructions of the system on the screen, as well as the action sequence between Lee and the kidnapper. Eventually, Lee gets the upper hand and controlled by the player he needs to choke the kidnapper which is done by pressing the A-button rapidly. After a while the cut scene begins showing Lee to choke the kidnapper to death. However, according to the Walkthrough, the player continued pressing the A-button even after the instructions of the system to do so had stopped and the cut scene of Lee strangling the man was already begun and the player had, supposedly, turned merely into a *helpless spectator*. At this point, the player did not feel he was a *helpless spectator* as he was actively participating in action even though the participation did not have any influence in the system, yet it influenced on the subjective gameplay experience and suspense.

After the cut scene, the player gains control and Lee faces the choices matter decision of E5e14. The system forces the player to choose whether to shoot the kidnapper to the head or not. According to the Walkthrough, the player's decision was to shoot the man. As Clementine is present and she has seen everything from fighting to strangling to death and to shooting of the man, *empathetic suspense* is heightened towards Clementine, as well as uncertainty on the following events which leads into questions e.g. how will all this influence on Clementine, a young girl? After this, the cut scene shows Lee to comfort Clementine and to give her a warm hug. They have a dialogue where Lee, controlled by

the player, can talk with Clementine a bit. The event, after a highly suspenseful climax of killing the kidnapper, has now come into a resolution. The event continues as Lee, controlled by the player, is free to navigate the surroundings. The only option for progression is to go out the same door he went in at the beginning of E5e13.

Episode 5, events #18

The last section under scrutiny is E5e18. This event completely differs from the previous choices matter situations, as the decision of someone's life or death is about the player character. In the previous event, Lee and Clementine have got inside a building from the streets filled with zombies. Lee is wounded deadly. He and Clementine have had a conversation that Lee is about to die in a few moments and eventually will turn into a zombie. The situation elicits not only *anticipation of the startle*, as the player is uncertain when the transformation is about to take place, but also *empathetic suspense* towards both Lee and Clementine. The event begins when Lee and Clementine are inside a room. Controlled by the player, but under strict rules of the system as the navigation is through a predefined path, Lee needs to walk across the room towards an exit door which is blocked by a zombie. Thus, the system indicates a clear short-term goal eliciting *competitive suspense*. At the beginning, the zombie is not a direct threat because it is in a different, smaller room, although visible as the zombie is seen behind a class window and this elicits *anticipation of the action sequence*. Lee is in weak condition and Clementine needs to help Lee to walk. Even though there is no time limit, the situation elicits *anticipation of the startle*. Firstly, because of the possible threat of the zombie that is seen. Secondly, because of the zombies that might be lurking in the shadows. And thirdly, because of Lee's poor condition which might turn him into a zombie in any minute. In other words, *anticipation of the startle* is elicited by both the player action and the system. However, the way of triggering the startle effect is still uncertain. Lee's condition elicits *empathetic suspense* also, on behalf of both the player character and on Clementine's well-being. According to the Walkthrough, when the player navigates Lee in a linear path towards the door which leads to the room with a class window Lee collapses which startles the player and elicits *empathetic suspense* as the fear of the death of the player character is elicited and the survival of Clementine is under jeopardy. The system indicates that the player needs to press the A-button which elicits *competitive suspense*. This resulted that the player began pressing the A-button rabidly because of the intensity of the situation as it combined three overlapping types of suspense: *competitive suspense*,

empathetic suspense, and the startle effect, which was sequent of *anticipation of the uncertain startle*. Because of the player action, Lee manages to get up two times when the player pushes the A-button several times but ultimately Lee collapses to the ground and almost loses consciousness. It is obvious that Lee is dying and cannot get up anymore. As the system removes the option to navigate, the player is now in control only through the dialogue. At this point, the perspective changes from 3rd person to 1st person. In other words, the game world is now seen through the eyes of Lee. As the player is now in control merely through dialogue, the short-term goal needs to be reached through commands given by Lee to Clementine and now the player has options in the dialogue to guide Clementine. While doing this the player becomes a *helpless spectator* every time Clementine performs an action eliciting several types of suspense as it is indicated in the text of the Walkthrough. At first, the player controls Lee to guide Clementine to take the baseball bat under the counter nearby and break the class window with it. The frightened reaction of Clementine and the persuasion and encouragement of Lee which is controlled by the player through dialogue elicits both *empathetic suspense* and *competitive suspense*. After persuasion, while the player is a *helpless spectator*, Clementine smashes the class window with the baseball bat. After that the player controls Lee to guide Clementine to open the lock of the door by standing on a chair eliciting *anticipation of the startle*. At this point it is shown that the zombie is on the other side unable to walk but Clementine is near it. As the player is once again a *helpless spectator* the zombie tries to catch Clementine from its place eventually succeeding by grapping her from the leg eliciting *empathetic suspense* and startling the player. Now Lee, controlled by the player, has an option to try to help Clementine by participating in action eliciting *competitive suspense*, as well. In the Walkthrough, the player controls Lee to try to help Clementine but without able to move properly as the system restricts the player action resulting in that Lee loses consciousness when a falling object from a table nearby drops on his head. As Lee is unconscious there is a moment of total blackness at the screen when both audio and visual representation is missing, and the helplessness of the player heightens the suspense at its peak as the main objective is jeopardized: the hope of Clementine's survival combining with the fear of her death intertwines with the uncertain outcome of the situation. As the perspective is still from the first person, Lee slowly recovers consciousness and the player is once again able to participate in action. The player sees that Clementine is at the mercy of the zombie indicating that there is probably a time limit to save Clementine linking the situation directly to the main objective. Eliciting again *competitive suspense* Lee has an

option to kick the baseball bat to Clementine and the player controls Lee to do it as quickly as possible because of the probable time limit. After that, the system limits the player's control only through dialogue, and the player can once more, through Lee, guide Clementine to kill the zombie. Now, it is shown that Clementine picks up the baseball bat and kills the zombie with it. As Clementine kills the zombie, the short-term goal is achieved and the event goes towards the resolution.

After that it is shown that Clementine approaches the dying Lee. The player, by controlling Lee, is in control of the dialogue and now faces the final choices matter decision of the game. The player needs to choose whether to guide Clementine to kill Lee or let Lee live which eventually would turn him into a zombie. Suspense of Lee turning into a zombie have been maintained throughout this episode and the climax of it is now inevitable. This in turn results that in this final event of the game both short-term goal of killing the zombie, and the main objective of keeping Clementine safe, as well as various types of suspense are intertwined. The final choices matter situation is not time limited, thus lowering the suspense as the player has time to consider the probable consequences of both the decisions. In fact, this situation is foremost an emotional, dialogue situation. However, the situation elicits *empathetic suspense* as the resolution is still uncertain, as well as *competitive suspense* if persuading Clementine to kill Lee is seen as such. In the Walkthrough, keeping in mind the primary objective, the player's first thought was how Clementine will survive indicating that *empathetic suspense* elicited from this situation was mainly because of Clementine. Surely, the player felt empathy towards Lee also but not in same extent as towards Clementine. Because of the well-being of Clementine and fearing Lee will turn into a zombie which could threaten Clementine the player decided to choose the option to kill Lee resulting in the player becoming a *helpless spectator*. The cut scene shows from the perspective of the first person the sobbing Clementine to rise her gun pointing towards Lee. Now, in the 'Zone of Becoming', as Lee is looking at the barrel of the gun, and foremost in an emotional situation, the player cannot do anything but to anticipate a startle. As Clementine pulls the trigger a loud bang is heard, and the screen turns black. In this moment *empathetic suspense* is elicited. However, according to the Walkthrough, the major concern was what happens to Clementine next?

The event of E5e18 combines all four types of suspense (*anticipation of the startle*, *competitive suspense*, *empathetic suspense*, and *helpless spectator*) both occurring sequentially and intertwined. In addition, the new type of suspense named *anticipation of*

the action sequence is elicited in this event. Furthermore, both eliciting and diminishing different types of suspense is underlined by the rabid changes between system's restrictions and the player control. This results that the whole event is extremely suspenseful. The balancing between player's control and being a *helpless spectator* heightens suspense to its peak which is underlined by the restrictions of the system and the limitations of the player control. Time limit or at least the indication of it as there is no visible time limit results in the player needs to act quickly and by instinct. The direct threat towards the primary objective of Clementine's well-being elicit *empathetic suspense* that is far greater than the threat towards the player character (according to the player's subjective experience in the Walkthrough). In the final event of the game not only the well-being of Clementine is the most crucial, but also *empathetic suspense* is elicited towards Clementine the most. However, the importance of Clementine's well-being is justified as it is the primary objective of the game which according to the Walkthrough is far more important than the survival of the player character.

9 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This chapter summarizes the process and the findings of the study. At first, the purpose, the research problem, the aim of the study, and the research question are listed. In chapter 9.1, the methodology and the findings are summarized which confirmed the expected results and presented new discoveries. In chapter 9.2, the limitations and problems of the study are discussed. Lastly, the suggestions for future research are presented.

As discussed in the Introduction chapter, there has been a lack of studies on suspense in the context of meaningful gameplay experience. Furthermore, the aim of this master's thesis was to present a more holistic view of suspense in video games. The qualitative textual analysis of the Walkthrough of *TWD:SI* conducted here was an attempt to fill the gap in the previous research of suspense in video games.

Research question (RQ) asked *How the experience of suspense is elicited through the meaningful gameplay experience?* However, before tackling the RQ, the master's thesis discussed meaningful gameplay experiences in chapter 2, 3 and 4 which highlighted the multi-disciplinary nature of game studies. The discussion was complex and included intertwined theories and concepts about games, players, and gameplay, and was further defined in the context of *TWD:SI* in chapter 7. Suspense in games was discussed in chapter 5 by categorizing the different types of suspense in video games, and presenting a new definition of suspense which is applicable especially in cinematic, story-driven games, such as *TWD:SI*. A total of four types of suspense were categorized: *anticipation of the startle*, *competitive suspense*, *empathetic suspense* and *helpless spectator* (Table 1). The new definition of suspense in video games was formulated as the following:

Suspense in video games is a subjective emotional experience of the player elicited from the combination of fear, hope, and uncertain outcome in response to the information acquired from the system combined to the player's earlier knowledge.

9.1 Findings of the study

RQ was tackled in chapter 8. The methodology was the qualitative textual analysis of the Walkthrough of *TWD:SI*, and the study was conducted with the help of the guideline presented in chapter 7. The Walkthrough was conducted by the method of (w)reading and

it was a written text of the subjective gameplay experience of *TWD:SI* played for the first time. Because of the massive amount of the text of the Walkthrough, the study was demarcated to the events of choices matter situations, comprehending a total of 13 events (Table 2). On one hand, this decision enabled a more thorough discussion of selected events, without the study becoming too extensive. On the other hand, this decision resulted that some of the interesting analysis of suspense were left out.

Table 3. Different types of suspense and new findings

Type of suspense	Definition
Anticipation of the startle	<i>“suspense relating to the fear of being startled. This is typically employed within the horror genre, where audiences receive a startle by the sudden appearance of a figure or object. When accompanied by a sharp loud sound, this has the effect of making the viewer jump. Since the event is not entirely unexpected the viewer experiences suspense in anticipation of the startle.”</i> (Van Vught & Schott, 2012, 96)
Competitive suspense	<i>“in our desire for personal success we are able to experience the fear of failure together with a desire to succeed. Due to the uncertainty of the game’s outcome we experience a mode of suspense we term competitive suspense.”</i> (Van Vught & Schott, 2012, 98)
Empathetic suspense	<i>“when the viewer’s knowledge is experienced in parallel with the character, empathetic suspense is a more likely response. This form of suspense is ‘shared’ with the character as imagined outcomes, implications and consequences occur in sync with a character’s on-screen reasoning and experiences.”</i> (Van Vught & Schott, 2012, 96)
Helpless spectator	<i>“generating suspense not by highlighting their unique ability to be interactive, but, to the contrary, limiting interactivity at key points, thereby turning players into helpless spectators like those that watch films.”</i> (Frome & Smuts, 2004, 31)
Anticipation of the action sequence	<i>Anticipation of the action sequence is elicited from the mixture of ‘the player’s earlier knowledge’ and ‘the information acquired from the system’.</i>
Unintended player elicited suspense	<i>This type of suspense occurs when the player interacts unintentionally which results in a suspenseful situation.</i>
Unintended system elicited suspense	<i>This type of suspense is unintentionally elicited from the system e.g. because of the design problems of the game.</i>

Answering the RQ confirmed the four types of suspense occurring in *TWD:SI* and presented new findings about suspense types (Table 3). There was a slight variation on the occurrence of the suspense types in the events as seen in Table 2. *Empathetic suspense* and *helpless spectator* occurred in 11/13 events. *Competitive suspense* occurred in 9/13 events, and *anticipation of the startle* in 8/13 events. Suspense types of *competitive suspense*, *empathetic suspense*, and *helpless spectator* were mainly elicited the way as predicted based on the previous research (Frome & Smuts, 2004; Van Vught & Schott,

2012). However, in some of the events suspense occurred unexpectedly, and indicated on the possibility of new findings.

The meaningful gameplay experience led to a new suspense type, which was named as *unintended player elicited suspense* (Table 3). This occurs when the player does something unintentional, which results in a suspenseful situation, such as in E3e3, where the player accidentally kills NPC, instead of a zombie. The analysis of the gameplay experience showed that unintentional suspense can be also elicited by the system. For example, in E1e19, the limitations of the navigation combined to a fast-paced action sequence resulted *unintended system elicited suspense* (Table 3).

The qualitative textual analysis confirmed the ways of eliciting *empathetic suspense* as theorized by Van Vught & Schott, 2012. E1e19 indicated that empathy elicits suspense quite differently than sympathy. Other events, e.g. E1e15 and E2e1, confirmed this. The discovery calls for the clarification and separation of the concepts of empathy and sympathy when analyzing suspense, especially in the case of *empathetic suspense*.

According to the qualitative textual analysis, *empathetic suspense* was elicited from the combination of ‘the information acquired from the system’ and ‘the player’s earlier knowledge’. For example, in E1e19 the decision of the choices matter situation was a result of the (w)reading that was influenced by the current event and e.g. assemblages, schemas, and genre conventions. Similar results were confirmed in other events, as well.

As argued in chapter 5, *competitive suspense* is a crucial element in games (Van Vught & Schott, 2012). However, e.g. in E3e11, there is no *competitive suspense* (if the dialogues are not considered as such, as argued in the Results chapter), which makes this event unique, compared to other events of this analysis. In E3e11, the player is merely a *helpless spectator* almost throughout the event, but in the choices matter situation the player gains control on deciding the destiny of Lilly. Because of the lack of *competitive suspense*, and the lack of player control, the player can more objectively form a decision in this type of choices matter situation, in expense of the subjectivity. This differs crucially from other choices matter situations, where the player is often in the middle of the action or trying to control the situation in the time-limited situation. E3e11 highlights the subjectivity of the gameplay experience in eliciting suspense.

As video games require an active participation of the player, it is logical that both the system as well as the player is needed in eliciting suspense. As indicated in the Results chapter, the way of how suspense is elicited can be controlled by the system or controlled by the player. The first one is more familiar and occurs with the four types of suspense. *Anticipation of the startle*, *competitive suspense*, *empathetic suspense*, and *helpless spectator* are all suspense types where the system is commonly in control eliciting the suspense (Frome & Smuts, 2004; Van Vught & Schott, 2012). The latter one, where the suspense is controlled by the player, is an interesting discovery of the qualitative textual analysis. It indicates that suspense controlled by the player is also elicited through all four types of suspense, only differently.

A major emphasis in the qualitative textual analysis was the suspense type of *anticipation of the startle*. Partly, this can be explained by the nature of the events which were selected for analysis. The game mechanics of the choices matter situations heavily rely on the game element of time limit which is an occurring element of the concept of *anticipation of the startle* (Van Vught & Schott, 2012), so it is natural that this type of suspense occurs in the events under analysis. Although the qualitative textual analysis confirmed the relationship of time limit and the fourth type of suspense, a closer analysis showed that there are exceptions to this issue. In some occasions, time limit as a game mechanic of the system, was not necessarily needed for eliciting *anticipation of the startle*. Instead, as the following examples indicate, the player's role is a more crucial aspect for triggering this type of suspense.

For example, E2e7 indicates that the time limit is not a necessity for the occurrence of *anticipation of the startle* which is the opposite as stated by Van Vught and Schott (2012). Instead, the player sets the pace of the situation as there are no time limit. In this event, the player is in control of triggering the startle effect, or more specifically a possibility for a startle. The way of eliciting *anticipation of the startle* in this situation is different than discussed by Van Vught and Schott (2012), who theorized that this type of suspense is elicited in a gameplay situation, where the system is in control by triggering an anticipated startling effect within the time limit, which eventually startles the player.

Anticipation of the startle was discussed to occur in time-limited situations where the player can expect something to happen (Van Vught & Schott, 2012). However, E5e14 presents a situation where *anticipation of the startle* is elicited without a clear time limit.

In addition, it is an interesting event because it clearly combines two types of suspense when anticipation elicits *competitive suspense*, as well. Furthermore, the gameplay experience leads to *anticipation of the action sequence* rather than a startle, which was a new finding (Table 3). As discussed in the Results chapter, *anticipation of the action sequence* is elicited from the combination of both ‘the information acquired from the system’ and ‘the player’s earlier knowledge’. For example, in E514 it is elicited during the dialogue where the player is in control, thus highlighting the subjective experience, as well. Furthermore, player’s active participation is the key to elicit different types of suspense in E5e14. During the (w)reading process the player is in the Zone of Becoming, where the story, and all the elements of the game are intertwined during the subjective gameplay experience, such as in the dialogue between Lee and the kidnapper.

Suspense type of *anticipation of the action sequence* can be discussed with the help of the events, where this new type of suspense did not elicit. For example, in E1e9 the uncertainty of what will happen next, resulted that the player did not anticipate an action sequence when the sounds of a zombie attack occurred. However, in the following events, the combination of ‘the player’s earlier knowledge’ and ‘the information acquired from the system’ immediately resulted that the player began to *anticipate the action sequence* (E2e7, E2e10, E5e13&14 and E5e18).

The last example of *anticipation of the startle* occurs in the final event of the game: in E5e18. In this event, *anticipation of the startle* is elicited by, both the player action, and the system. However, the way of triggering the startle effect is still uncertain at the beginning. E5e18 presents a more traditional *anticipation of the startle*, as well. The situation where Clementine is about to shoot Lee with a gun, is where the player is merely a *helpless spectator*, and only watches Clementine to perform the action of shooting Lee.

The mutual connection of the examples above is that *anticipation of the startle* is not directly linked to the time limit of the system, but instead it is triggered by the subjective gameplay experience of the player. At best, it is not dependable of the system control of eliciting suspense with the time limit, but instead, the player is in control by choosing the moment of triggering suspense during gameplay. The player sets the pace in time limitless situations and most importantly knowing that something will happen: an uncertain outcome, with an *anticipation of the startle*.

All in all, the qualitative textual analysis of the Walkthrough of *TWD:SI* led to a conclusion that the gameplay experience should be analyzed as a whole. Furthermore, the gameplay experience of an event cannot be analyzed thoroughly without taking the previous events into consideration. In Results chapter, the concepts of short and long-term goals and main objective were discussed in relation with different types of suspense, and how they combined influence in the events of choices matter situations. The qualitative textual analysis indicated that short-term goals combined with suspense was influenced by ‘the player’s earlier knowledge’ and ‘the information acquired from the system’ which influences on the subjective gameplay experience. The combination of sequent events can elicit long period suspense, influenced by ‘the player’s earlier knowledge’ and ‘the information acquired from the system’. This in turn can elicit suspense in a single event. One of the best examples of this is in the E4e33, where the choices matter decision of whether to save Ben or not is affected by both the event occurring and the previous events of the game. Dialogues, player actions and the relationships of the player character and NPCs that have emerged during the gameplay, all affect to the choice that the player is about to make in the suspenseful situation.

In some of the events, all four previously existing types of suspense (Table 2) were elicited. In these events, the meaningful gameplay experience was the most intense, when suspense and other related emotions were elicited. Even though the gameplay experience is a subjective experience, and thus the intensity of emotions is difficult to measure, it is safe to say that based on the qualitative textual analysis of the Walkthrough of *TWD:SI* the combination of all types of suspense is bigger than the sum of its parts.

9.2 Possible limitations and problems of the study

The gameplay experience of suspense itself set limitations to the study. In chapter 5 and 7, suspense in video games was defined in the context of cinematic, story-driven games, such as *TWD:SI*. Because of the vast amount of research done on the topic of suspense, only the most applicable concepts were used in that definition. Beside the genre-centered approach, suspense was defined as an emotion, instead of a mood. However, scientists are still arguing about the correct number of basic emotions, and where their roots are planted, including suspense. Consensus of whether to categorize suspense as an emotion or a mood have not been reached either. All the mentioned aspects set limitations to the

study. Although the theories and definition presented in this master's thesis are applicable in the context of story-driven video games, such as *TWD:SI*, they do not necessarily function as such in the context of more abstract video games, for example.

As the study conducted is a case study of a single player's gameplay experience, some problems may occur if replicating this study, as well. For example, problems may occur in the case of certain player types e.g. when the player sees characters merely as vessels and not something to identify to. Player's motivation, knowledge, and capability to acquire information are also the key factors. For example, players that do not understand or are not willing to understand the theme or the genre of the game they are playing, makes the use of the theories and concepts presented in this master's thesis problematic.

In chapter 5, suspense was defined as subjective experience based on the combination of fear, hope, and uncertainty. Thus, suspense can be experienced only once in a similar way during the gameplay. That is why the first time of playing is the most important one, as exactly same situations in terms of uncertainty are impossible to duplicate. Because of the uniqueness of the experience, the whole process had to be planned carefully.

The qualitative textual analysis was conducted from the Walkthrough of *TWD:SI* which was a written text of a subjective gameplay experience of a first time of playing. Although the methodology was to objectively analyse the written text, the problems occurred, because of the subjective nature of the text. The method conducted in the Walkthrough was (w)reading. At the beginning, the data was written in parallel ways and it was gathered from the angle of both the game mechanics and the story. At first, the technique of separating the data was fruitful, but as the process of (w)reading progressed, it became evident that those two angles are intertwined and, thus should be analysed as whole. The (w)reading technique was then altered and the parallel ways of game mechanics and story were emerged as one, holistic way of collecting data, called the gameplay.

When done thoroughly, the qualitative textual analysis should increase the reliability of the study. As mentioned in Methodology chapter, this is more difficult in the case of qualitative approach compared to quantitative approach mainly because of the subjective nature of the Walkthrough. However, the subjectivity is also a strength of this study. As mentioned in chapter 6, humans are subjective and complex creatures, and the aim of qualitative research is to explore the complexity among humans. Keeping this in mind,

the study conducted here offers reliable and multisided analysis of the meaningful gameplay experience of *TWD:SI*.

There were problems with the techniques of the method of the Walkthrough. It was conducted by (w)reading which is an appropriate method, but the problems occurred with the technique the text was written. The writing was intended to be done in so-called natural pauses e.g. when the event is over, or the game is in standstill (when the player is in total control of the actions). For example, the data collection technique resulted that the gameplay experience stopped occasionally which unintentionally lowered the experience of suspense. In addition, the (w)reader often had to wait for these natural pauses to occur, and inevitable forgetting some aspects of the gameplay experience while waiting for these pauses. Sometimes, consciously waiting for natural pauses resulted that the waiting process interfered with the gameplay experience. The human memory capacity is also limited which inevitable resulted that some aspects of the gameplay experience were bound to be forgotten before writing the text. Furthermore, the purpose was to analyse the first and a single time of playing *TWD:SI* which meant that the (w)reader had only one chance to collect the data. This meant that the (w)reader had to be extremely focused all the time which was stressful at times.

One of the problems of the study was the setting of the study, which had an influence on the (w)reading process. The problems were minimized by keeping the setting as much the same as possible from playing sessions to another. However, at times the Walkthrough was written in different locations and at different times of the day which may have influenced the subjective (w)reading process.

9.3 Future research

The qualitative textual analysis of the Walkthrough of *TWD:SI* not only showed the occurrence of the four categorized types of suspense from previous literature, but also confirmed the similarity in results compared to the preceding studies of suspense in video games. The study revealed new findings about suspense, how the newly found types of suspense are elicited during the gameplay experience, and that they intertwine with the already discovered four types of suspense.

Although suspense has been a widely researched topic, the study conducted in this master's thesis revealed several new findings. The revelation of the new findings stresses the importance of further studying the topic of suspense, as this proves that there are still more to be understood from this topic. I call for future research for, not only the individual categorised types of suspense (Table 1), but also newly found suspense types (Table 3), as well as the connection of all suspense types. Both the study of individual and intertwined connections is needed for better understanding their nature, and the way of how different types of suspense are elicited in the meaningful gameplay experience.

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APPENDIX: SELECTED EVENTS OF THE WALKTHROUGH OF *THE WALKING DEAD: SEASON 1*

The first choices matter situation occurs in event 9 of the first episode (E1e9). In this event, the player character, Lee, accompanied with Clementine, is on a farm of Hershel. The farm is a safe haven in the world gone mad for the survivors trying to make sense for all of the things happened. The other survivors at the farm are the family of Kenny, Katjaa and Duck, and Hershel's son Shawn, which all are introduced in the previous events. E1e9 begins as a dialogue between Hershel and Lee is interrupted with the off-screen sounds. After a brief cut scene, an action sequence begins, where Duck is in the driver's seat of a tractor and a zombie is pulling him off the seat, while Duck is trying to break free from the hands of a certain death. Shawn is under the tractor and helplessly screaming for help. Resembling a scene of a movie or a tv-show, this event elicits empathetic suspense. Controlling Lee, the player now faces choices matter situation: will he save Duck, who is already at the hands of the zombies, or Shawn, who is trapped under the vehicle. The player acts by simply navigating towards Duck's or Shawn's direction and pressing the A-button to fight the zombie in a time limited situation. The decision was to save Duck, eliciting both empathetic and competitive suspense simultaneously. Shortly after the player decision, Kenny joins in a fight to save his son, resulting that Duck survives. But choices matter, and Shawn is killed by zombies while others watch helplessly, including the player character, as the time is limited for saving both. As a result of the event, Hershel blames everyone, especially Lee, for the death of his son, and angrily kicks everyone out from the farm. This creates uncertainty of the following events, and even though the climax of the event is passed, the suspense continues.

The second choices matter situation occurs in E1e15, when Lee, Glenn and Carley meet a frightened girl, introduced as Irene, who is locked inside a hotel room. Through dialogue, the group discovers that Irene is bitten and that is why she was reluctant to open the door. Shortly after, Lee, controlled by the player, faces choices matter decision: convince Irene to leave with them, or respect her will to kill herself by giving her a gun, and thus, preventing the inevitable transformation into a zombie. When the dialogue continues, Glenn and Carley make their opinions clear, as they are reluctant to let Irene to kill herself. Lee, controlled by the player, convince Glenn and Carley to allow Irene to

kill herself and the uncertainty of the outcome results empathetic suspense. Cut scene shows that Lee stays for the time as she takes her own life, and to get the gun back. This choices matter situation differs crucially from other ones in *TWD:SI*, as this situation is foremost an emotional one, and less suspenseful. The findings indicate that this event elicit only empathetic suspense, although the possibility of eliciting competitive suspense also is discussed in the Discussion chapter.

The third choices matter situation under scrutiny is in E1e19, which is a suspenseful continuum to the previous event (E1e18). In this event, action intensifies and becomes extremely suspenseful instantly. The uncertainty of the event elicits both fear, and hope, not only on the behalf of the player character, Lee, but also on the primary goal: to keep Clementine safe. In addition, short term goals, i.e. event goals are suspenseful. The challenge is created as Lee, accompanied by the members of the group of survivors, needs to keep the zombies away in an action sequence, by pressing the correct button of the controller at the right spot, for enabling the group to escape the pharmacy, while keeping in mind the primary goal of keeping Clementine safe. In this event both empathetic and competitive suspense are intertwined. The event escalates quickly to the point where a big, choices matter decision is to be made. In a time-limited situation, the system forces the player to control Lee and to decide which one to save from the certain death of the zombie attack: Carley or Doug. This selection is done by navigating the controller towards the desired person and pressing the A-button. After the choices matter situation, the rest of the group manages to escape from the pharmacy, except Lee, who is the last one to get out while zombies are approach. As Lee, controlled by the player, is approaching the exit, suddenly Larry knocks Lee unconscious. The player becomes a helpless spectator, and while hearing Clementine screaming after Lee, several zombies begins to gather around him. Then, in the dying seconds, a helping hand of Kenny appears, and Lee is rescued.

In E1e19, suspense is also elicited by the gameplay limitations. For example, the navigation is not up to the fast-paced action of the event, as the navigation is slow at times, and occasionally the correct area in the interface where to press the correct button of the controller is relatively small and the player has to struggle to find the correct area. This kind of suspense is a prime example of unintentional, system elicit suspense, that is defined in this master's thesis. This type of suspense occurred previously in the E1e11.

As that event is not choices matter situation, and thus, not at the scope of this master's thesis, E1e11 is not thoroughly discussed here.

The second episode begins with an introductory cut scene, where Lee and Mark, are introduced for the first time in the game, are on a hunting trip for food. They hear someone screaming, and the conversation between them reveals they think its Kenny, eliciting empathetic suspense. The cut scene continues, and they find a man named David who is trapped in a bear trap and two teenagers, Ben and Travis, around him frightened. After that Kenny appears at the scene. The empathetic suspense remains, yet differently, and is now projected on David, which is discussed more in the Conclusion chapter. After this, the player is no longer a helpless spectator, as the cut scene ends, and now the player faces choices matter decision and has an option to participate by controlling Lee. The event turns into a time limited situation, although time limit is not clearly indicated, and the system forces the player to choose whether, or not to cut off David's leg while several zombies start to appear from the woods. The player cuts the leg with an axe by pressing the correct button of the controller, thus, eliciting competitive suspense. After the decision, the player continues cutting the leg by pressing the A-button several times in order to cut the leg all the way through while the zombies are approaching. As the player proceeds to control Lee to cut the leg by pressing the A-button rabidly, this action suddenly stops as the system turns player into a helpless spectator. One of the two kids, Travis, gets attacked by zombie, as the player character, and the NPCs watch helplessly. This elicit empathetic suspense on whether the rest of the group will survive. The cut scene continues showing that, now one-legged, David is relieved from the bear trap. E2e1 ends as the group of Lee, Mark, Kenny, David and Ben escapes, while Travis gets killed by zombies.

Next event under inspection occurs after Lee agrees to go on an exploration to find bandits with Danny, a suspicious man who lives in a farm nearby with his brother and his mother. Suspense is elicited by being a helpless spectator during a cut scene, when Lee and Danny search the bandits' camp. After a cut scene they find the bandits camp and E2e7 begins. Two types of suspense is elicited when the system gives a direct command to the player to search the camp, and the player has no choice but to follow the command in order to continue playing: empathetic suspense towards the player character, and anticipation to a startle, even though there is no time limit, and the player is in total control of the pace. After navigating Lee to the camp, the player is free, by controlling the player character,

to investigate the camp site, and suspense is lowered as anticipation to a startle disappears. When the player navigates and interacts with the surroundings, the system uses several techniques which triggers different types of suspense, namely empathetic suspense, anticipation of a startle, and helpless spectator. All of these are more specifically discussed in the Discussion chapter. After one of these suspense triggering moments, and when the player is a helpless spectator, a cut scene shows a woman appearing at the camp site. She yells at Danny and have him at her crosshair with her crossbow. Danny is also pointing his gun at her. Now, as Lee is out of the tent, the player character is also under a threat. The player gains little control, when the dialogue begins. The woman and Danny are arguing, and the player, controlling Lee, can participate through a strictly time limited dialogue. The situation elicits both empathetic suspense, as the player character is under threat, and competitive suspense, as the player has an option to influence on the outcome through dialogue. During the dialogue, the player soon faces choices matter decision. The system gives the player options through dialogue to choose to shoot the woman, to tell Danny to shoot her, or ask questions. The player's choice was to ask questions, which resulted that the woman began blaming and making accusations. Things escalated quickly in the dialogue, and while the woman made more accusations, suddenly, Danny shot her. As the player is once again a helpless spectator, Lee replies in a conversation shocked: "You murdered her." Danny, on the other hand, is not shocked about his decision. Instead, he is suspiciously calm.

E2e10 begins as the group, consisting Lee, Clementine, Kenny, Larry and Lilly, is locked inside a room inside the barn by Danny and Andrew. At the same time, rest of the Kenny's family, Katjaa and Duck, are held as hostages by Danny and Andrew, resulting empathetic suspense towards, not only the group locked in, but also the hostages. Player is in control of navigating Lee in a restricted space of the locked room, and the only way to advance is to begin a dialogue with other members of the group, as the system limits the options the player has. When Lee has a dialogue with Larry, things get tense rather quickly as Larry gets agitated and resulting him to have a heart attack. This instantly elicit many types of suspense, as there is a real chance Larry might die, and worse, turning into a zombie. The moment, when Larry has a heart attack, elicit both empathetic suspense, and the possibility of a competitive suspense, which is discussed more thoroughly in Discussion chapter. After Larry's heart-attack, Kenny instantly insist that they should kill Larry to prevent him turning into a zombie. Obviously, Lilly wants to save her dad and

starts the resuscitation. Now the player, by controlling Lee, is forced by the system to do big choices matter decision within a time limit. The player has two options: to team up with Kenny to kill Larry or to help Lilly to try saving Larry's life. The decision is made by pressing the appropriate button of the controller indicated by the system. The player chose to help Lilly. The cut scene shows that Kenny is shocked by Lee's decision. While Lee resuscitates Larry, Kenny picks up a big, heavy salt lick nearby and throws it at Larry's head smashing it to pieces. Lee is shocked, but it is nothing compared to Lilly's reaction obviously. Kenny is also shocked, but in a different way. Clementine is also shocked. All in all, the choices matter situation is an extremely suspenseful moment, and happens quickly.

In E3e3, Lee and Kenny are scavenging, and they see a woman surrounded by zombies in the streets at the distance. She is clearly trapped. Kenny is trying to persuade Lee to leave the woman alone and let the zombies kill her as it is not their business to interfere, and he does not want to attract the zombies' attention towards them. Lee, on the other hand, cannot let the woman die helplessly. While Lee and Kenny have a conversation, in which the player cannot participate, the player needs to do choices matter decision, which is not clearly indicated during the event. Looking through a scope of the rifle, the player has an option to aim and shoot the rifle or not. This elicits, not only empathetic suspense towards the trapped woman, but also competitive suspense as the player needs to aim and shoot within a time limit, which is not clearly indicated. The player looked through the scope quickly to see if there would be a way to save the woman somehow. As the zombies came nearer and nearer towards the screaming woman, the player not only felt fear and hope of the uncertain outcome, but also empathetic suspense and competitive suspense, which were underlined by the presumed time limit. As the player saw the nearest zombie about to catch the woman, the player instantly tried to shoot the zombie hoping that the possible outcome would be to save her. The outcome was surprising. Lee, controlled by the player, shot the woman. As this was done completely accidentally, the event elicited new type of suspense, which is named as unintentional player created suspense and is discussed more in the Discussion chapter. After this the player turns instantly into a helpless spectator and the cut scene shows Lee and Kenny escaping the zombies, and the hope and fear of uncertain outcome turns towards the well-being of Lee and Kenny.

Next under scrutiny is E3e11, which follows a highly suspenseful event 10 of episode 3, in which the group managed to escape the bandits and the swarming zombies, who both

attacked them simultaneously at the hotel. E3e11 begins with a cut scene where the group, now consisting of Lee, Clementine, Kenny, Katjaa, Duck, Lilly, Carley and Ben, are escaping with the RV (recreational vehicle). Kenny is driving, while Katjaa and Duck are beside him, and the rest of the group are at the back of the RV. The previous events fresh in mind, Lilly begins her accusations about the stolen items at the camp, which ultimately led to the attack by bandits, and she blames Carley and Ben. Once again, controlled by the player, Lee is in the middle of an argument, which he can take part through a time limited dialogue. As the situation quickly intensifies, the fear and hope of the uncertain outcome begins to mix. Suddenly, in the middle of an argument, a suspenseful cut scene begins where it is shown that the RV hits a zombie in the middle of a road, which quickly forces Kenny to stop the vehicle at the side of the road. The group disembark from the vehicle, but the concern over the zombie accident turns quickly again to the argument between Lilly, and Carley and Ben, where the player character, Lee, acts as a middle man once more. Through an intense dialogue, where the player has a limited time to participate, things quickly escalate, and the player becomes a helpless spectator. A cut scene shows Carley to yell at Lilly, ultimately resulting Lilly to shoot Carley in the head. Everybody is in shock, including Lee, which is shown by the look on the faces of the characters. A highly suspenseful cut scene continues as Lee quickly catches Lilly's hands and pushes her on the side of the RV. Lilly is shocked too, not because of Lee's reaction apparently, but because she shot a human being. Kenny yells that the rest of the group should leave Lilly behind, and now Lee, controlled by the player, needs to make choices matter decision. Lee needs to decide whether to leave Lilly behind at her own in the middle of nowhere, or to take her with the rest of the group. The decision was to take Lilly with the rest of the group.

E4e5 begins with a cut scene from the perspective of the player character, which shows that Kenny is in the attic on his knees on the floor. As Lee approaches him behind, the player is merely in control to begin a dialogue with Kenny. After participating in the dialogue, the player selected to ask Kenny what he is doing. Simultaneously, it is shown that there is a boy, which has turned into a zombie. As the dialogue between Lee and Kenny continues, they eventually come to conclusion that the boy has probably starved to death resulting him turning into a zombie. Kenny continues the dialogue by saying the boy looks like Duck, Kenny's son, who he lost along with his wife in the previous episode. Now, the player faces choices matter situation and has two options to choose from:

whether to kill the zombie boy by himself or to encourage Kenny to do that. When these options are presented in the dialogue, empathetic suspense is elicited. The player chose to encourage Kenny to put the zombie boy out of its misery. Eventually, a cut scene shows Kenny to shoot the zombie boy. Kenny says that they should bury the boy, and controlling the player character still merely through dialogue, the player chose an option where Lee promises to bury the boy. Soon after, a cut scene shows Lee carrying the boy out of the attic.

The suspenseful situation that began in the previous event continues in the E4e33. Previously, the zombies attacked the group and killed one of the group members. Eventually, the rest of the group were able to escape through a door, and now a cut scene shows they end up at the bell tower. At this point the player is merely a helpless spectator. A cut scene continues and shows that Lee cannot shut the door behind him, so they need to go downstairs to continue escaping the zombies. At the floor level, as the cut scene continues, the situation elicits also anticipation of a startle, when Lee is about to open the door. The suspense heightens when it is revealed that there are zombies behind the door, which is now open, simultaneously startling the player. At the same time, Kenny finds a shotgun, throws it to Lee and within a few seconds the player is in control, which instantly elicits competitive suspense. Now, although able to participate in the action, the system restricts the player to navigate the player character, Lee, to go back upstairs, and while doing this, to aim and shoot the approaching zombies. After a while in the middle of climbing the stairs, Lee's leg goes through the stairs. Now, because of the system's restrictions, the player character is stuck, limiting the navigation. As the situation intensifies, the player needs to press different buttons in order to pull out Lee's leg up, and while doing that, the player has to continue shooting the approaching zombies. This situation combines both competitive and empathetic suspense at its peak, and all of this is underlined by the limitation of time. After pressing the correct buttons, Lee manages to release his foot. Although, the player is again in control of the navigation, the system still restricts the path of navigation, and the only option for the player is to navigate Lee to continue climbing up the stairs. While doing this, suddenly zombies appears in Lee's path. Instantly, a shot is fired from upstairs killing one zombie nearby, and it is indicated that the shot was taken by Christa. Now Lee, who is out of ammunition, takes out his axe and the action sequence eliciting competitive suspense continues and the player has to control Lee to kill all the zombies out of his way in order to reach upstairs. After reaching

upstairs, the player turns once more merely a helpless spectator, and cut scene shows that the rest of the group continues the escape through the ladders outside and their destination is back to the sewers. Suddenly, Ben is gripped by a zombie. Ben stumbles and falls, but in a nick of time Lee reaches his hand and gets a grip on Ben preventing him falling into a certain death. When Lee is holding Ben with one hand preventing him to drop, the player can now participate in a dialogue with Ben, before making the choices matter decision. Ben encourages Lee to let go and drop him by making justifications for this action, while Kenny participates in the dialogue by agreeing Ben. Kenny's participation in the dialogue has a direct influence on empathetic suspense, reminding the player to consider other characters of the game, especially Clementine, and how the decision influence, not only them, but also the relationship between Lee and other characters. Ben also says that there is no time, which implies directly to the time limit, which in turn elicit suspense. In the end, the decision was to save Ben and a cut scene shows Lee pulling Ben up and the whole group manages to escape. The motives and relationship of the intertwined types of suspense are more thoroughly discussed in the Discussion chapter.

E5e13 begins when Lee enters a room. The room is poorly lit and empty, besides a dresser, two chairs, and a door that probably leads to a small bathroom or a wardrobe. The player is in control, and free to navigate and investigate the surroundings. When the player navigates towards the mentioned door, a cut scene begins turning the player into a helpless spectator. The cut scene shows a man with a gun approaching Lee behind him, which elicits both empathetic suspense and anticipation of a startle. Player gains little control when the dialogue begins. The man commands Lee to hand over his stuff, which is the first choices matter decision of these two events connected. Now, as the player is in control, the decision is whether to obey the man and give up weapons, or not. The decision was to give up weapons. By choosing that option the player again turns into a helpless spectator, and a cut scene shows Lee to give up his weapons reluctantly to the man with a gun. Seeing Lee's reaction resulted mixed feelings to the player. In addition, the situation elicited empathetic suspense, which was much more intense, than it would have been without Lee's reaction. This is discussed more thoroughly in the Discussion chapter. After that, as the player is still merely a helpless spectator, E5e14 begins, and the cut scene shows the man and Lee to sat on two armchairs face-to-face. The man has a gun in his hand and a bowling bag on the floor beside his armchair. The player gains some control when the dialogue begins. The man begins by asking questions about Lee, and the

player is in control to participate or not. During the dialogue the story of the man is revealed. He tells Lee that he has lost his son, his wife and his daughter. The man continues that he was the owner of the station wagon, which Lee and the group apparently rob in E2e16. On a side note, Lee and his group was unaware that the station wagon belonged to anyone at the time, but nevertheless their action was a cause to a chain of events in the Walking Dead universe, which is now revealed by the man with a gun. He continues that he has heard the conversations the group have had through Clementine's walkie-talkie. In addition, Clementine has told the man information about Lee and the rest of the group. The suspense is heightened, as the man tells Lee that he is going to revenge the pain he has suffered and making a direct threat towards the player character by saying he is going to hurt Lee, eliciting empathetic suspense. This also results an anticipate to startle, yet differently. More specifically, the player began to anticipate an action sequence, which in turn will elicit competitive suspense, which is more thoroughly discussed in the Discussion chapter. Soon after, during the man's monologue, the rope between two doors is loosen, and Lee sees Clementine approaching from the door, instantly eliciting empathetic suspense. Now Lee, controlled by the player, can interact with the surroundings by pressing the A-button in a desired place of the screen, eliciting competitive suspense. The player guided Lee by pressing the A-button on the bottle that was on the table, to indicate Clementine to take the bottle, and hopefully to hit the man with it. Now, as the player becomes a helpless spectator, the empathetic suspense is heightened more because of Clementine's well-being, and not for the player character. Being a helpless spectator, the player cannot do anything but watch as Clementine takes the bottle and begins to slowly walk towards the man with a gun. As Clementine walks, step by step, the suspense is heightened at its peak, eliciting empathetic suspense and anticipation of a startle. When Clementine is behind the man, she quickly hits the man on the head with the bottle. Lee, now again controlled by the player, needs to attack the man by pressing the correct button in the correct spot. The player controls Lee to attack the man, as quickly as possible. Choosing this option resulted an anticipated action sequence to begin, which instantly elicited competitive suspense. In the action sequence the player needs to press both A- and Y-buttons at the right time to fight the man. This resulted that the player pressed the buttons anxiously as the player had to follow, not only the instructions of the system on the screen, but also the action sequence. Eventually, Lee gets the upper hand, and, controlled by the player, he needs to choke the man, which is done by pressing the A-button rapidly. After a while, a cut scene begins. As the cut scene

continues, the man is eventually dead, and now, the player gains control and Lee faces choices matter decision. The system forces the player to choose whether to shoot the man to the head or not. The player's decision was to shoot the man. After this, the cut scene shows Lee to comfort Clementine, and to give her a warm hug. They have a dialogue, where Lee, controlled by the player, can talk with Clementine a bit. The event, after a highly suspenseful climax of killing the man, has now come into a resolution. The event continues as Lee, controlled by the player, is free to navigate the surroundings. The only option for progression is to go out the same door he went in at the beginning of E5e13.

The last section under scrutiny is E5e18, which differs from the previous choices matter situations, as the decision of someone's life or death is about the player character. In the previous event, Lee and Clementine have got inside a building from the streets filled with zombies. Lee is wounded deadly. He and Clementine have had a conversation that Lee is about to die in a few moments and eventually will turn into a zombie. The situation elicits, not only anticipation of a startle, as the player is uncertain when the transformation is about to take place, but also empathetic suspense towards both Lee and Clementine. The event begins when Lee and Clementine are inside a room. Controlled by the player, although under strict rules of the system as the navigation is through a predefined path, Lee needs to walk across the room towards an exit door, which is blocked by a zombie. The system, thus, indicates a clear objective, eliciting competitive suspense. At the beginning, the zombie is no direct threat, as it is in a different, smaller room, although visible, as the zombie is seen behind a class window. Lee is in weak condition, and Clementine needs to help Lee to walk. Although, there is no time limit, the situation elicits anticipation of a startle. Firstly, because of the possible threat of the zombie that is seen. Secondly, because of the zombies that might be lurking in the shadows. And thirdly, because of Lee's poor condition, which might turn him into a zombie in any minute. Lee's condition elicits empathetic suspense also, on behalf of both the player character and on Clementine's well-being. As the player navigates Lee, guided by Clementine, in a linear path towards the door which leads to the room with a class window, Lee collapses, which startles the player and elicits empathetic suspense, as the fear of the death of the player character elicited and the survival of Clementine is under jeopardy. The system indicates the player to press the A-button, and considering the intensity of the event, it resulted that the player began pressing the button rabidly. Lee manages to get up two times when the player pushes the A-button several times, but ultimately Lee collapses to the ground, and

almost loses consciousness. It is obvious that Lee is dying and cannot get up anymore. As the system removes the option to navigate, the player is now in control only through the dialogue. At this point, the perspective changes from 3rd person to 1st person, in other words the game world is now seen through the eyes of Lee. As the player is now in control merely through dialogue, the primary objective is reached through commands given by Lee to Clementine, and now the player has options in the dialogue to guide Clementine. While doing this, the player becomes a helpless spectator every time Clementine performs an action, eliciting several types of suspense. At first, the player controls Lee to guide Clementine to take the baseball bat under the counter nearby and break the class window with it. The frightened reaction of Clementine, and the persuasion and encouragement of Lee, which was controlled by the player through dialogue, elicits both empathetic suspense and competitive suspense. After persuasion, while the player is a helpless spectator, Clementine smashes the class window with the baseball bat. After that, the player controls Lee to guide Clementine to open the lock of the door by standing on a chair, eliciting anticipation of a startle. At this point, it is shown that the zombie is on the other side unable to walk, but Clementine is near it. As the player is once again a helpless spectator, the zombie tries to catch Clementine from its place, eventually succeeding by grappling her from the leg, eliciting empathetic suspense and startling the player. Now Lee, controlled by the player, has an option to try to help Clementine by participating in action. The player controls Lee to try to help Clementine, but without able to move properly, resulting that Lee loses consciousness when a falling object from a table nearby drops on his head. As Lee is unconscious, there is a moment of total blackness at the screen, and the helplessness of the player heightens the suspense at its peak, as both audio and visual representation is missing. As the perspective is still from the first person, Lee slowly recovers consciousness, and the player is once again able to participate in action. The player sees that Clementine is at the mercy of the zombie, indicating that there is probably a time limit. Lee has an option to kick the baseball bat to Clementine, and the player controls Lee to do it as quickly as possible, because of the probable time limit. After that, the system limits the player's control only through dialogue, and the player can once more, through Lee, guide Clementine to kill the zombie. Now it is shown that Clementine picks up the baseball bat and kills the zombie with it. As Clementine kills the zombie, the climax of the event is reached, and the event goes towards the resolution. Then, it is shown that Clementine approaches the dying Lee. The player, by controlling Lee, is in control of the dialogue and now faces the final choices matter decision of the

game. The player needs to choose whether to guide Clementine to kill Lee, or let Lee live, which eventually would turn him into a zombie. The situation is not time limited, thus, lowering the suspense as the player has time to consider the probable consequences of both the decisions. In fact, it is foremost an emotional dialogue situation. However, the situation elicits empathetic suspense, as the resolution is still unknown, and competitive suspense also, if persuading Clementine to kill Lee is seen as such. The player decided to choose the option to kill Lee, resulting the player becoming a helpless spectator. A cut scene shows, from the perspective of the first person, the sobbing Clementine to rise her gun facing towards Lee. Now, as Lee is looking at the barrel of the gun, and foremost in an emotional situation, the player cannot do anything but to anticipate a startle. As Clementine pulls the trigger, a loud bang is heard, and the screen turns black. In this moment, empathetic suspense is elicited. However, the major concern is what happens to Clementine next?